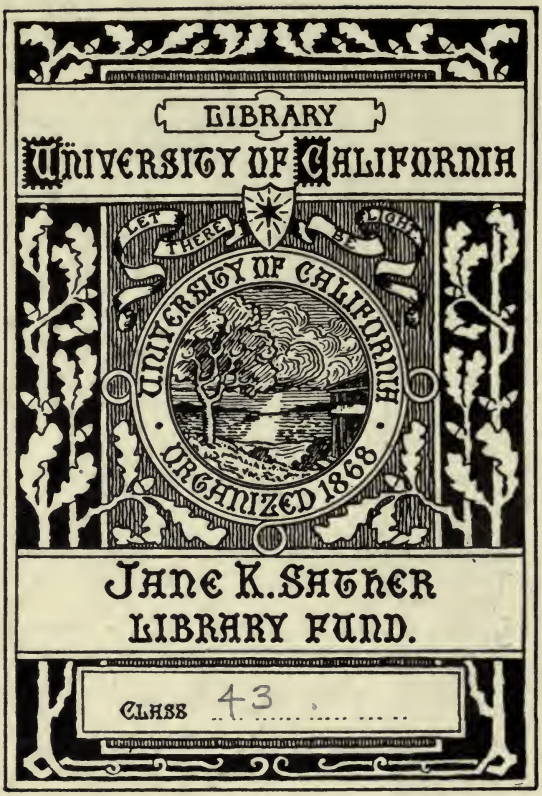
EGYPT
ANCIENT SITES AND MODERN SCENES

GASTON MASPERO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EGYPT: ANCIENT SITES AND MODERN SCENES

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THE RUINS OF PHILAE.

EGYPT: ANCIENT SITES AND MODERN SCENES

By SIR GASTON MASPERO

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TRANSLATED BY ELIZABETH LEE

WITH SEVENTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS

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PREFATORY NOTE

A PART of my duties as Director of the "Service des Antiquités" in Egypt consists in an annual inspection of the monuments. From 1881 to 1886, the period of my first sojourn in Egypt, a steamboat, the *Menchieh*, was put at my disposal. She was better known to the riverside population by the name of *Nimro Hadachere*, No. 11. She was a flat-bottomed brigantine, provided with an engine of a type archaic enough to deserve a place in the Museum of Arts and Crafts. From 1840 to 1860 she had regularly performed the journey to and fro between Alexandria and Cairo once a month. She was then invalided on account of old age, but was again put into working order for the visit of Prince Napoleon to Egypt in 1863. In 1875 she was presented to Mariette, and after a long period of inaction, descended to me, and I made my journeys in her for five years. My successors, however, did not preserve her, and on my return I found a princely old dahabieh, the *Miriam*, which I have used ever since.

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At the beginning of my campaign, about the middle of December, I tow her, without making a halt, to the limit of my course, to Assouân or Ouadi-Halfah. Thence I abandon myself to the stream, the wind sometimes assisting my progress, but more often preventing it, so that day after day we are obliged to have recourse to the oars in order to advance a mile or two. Such a method of navigation, although no longer to the taste of the tourist, offers great advantages to the Director of the "Antiquités." It gives him an opportunity of visiting less important sites where no one stops unless compelled, sites that he would not himself have thought of visiting had not the impossibility of proceeding against the wind forced him to drop anchor in their neighbourhood. To these unpremeditated delays I owe not only several monuments which make no bad figure in the Museum, but also impressions of modern Egypt that help me to a better understanding of ancient Egypt. I noted down these impressions from day to day without any object beyond that of giving adequate expression to what I felt or observed, and from 1900 printed in *Le Temps* every year those of them that seemed likely to interest Egyptologists, and at the same time to make appeal to the general public.

Prefatory Note

M. Guilmoto, the publisher of "New Light on Ancient Egypt," suggested that I should collect these articles and issue them in volume form. The idea found favour with me, and I consented. I obtained M. Hébrard's permission to use the articles that had appeared in *Le Temps*, and I added to them some that had been printed in *La grande Revue* and in *La Revue d'Orient*.

May I express the hope that readers who know Egypt will recognise it in this book, and those who do not yet know it, may be inspired by these pages to make its acquaintance?

G. MASPERO.

BIBEH.

NOTE ON THE SPELLING OF THE EGYPTIAN NAMES

(*Written specially for the English edition*)

THE transcriptions of the Egyptian names in this volume differ so materially from those in general use in England that a word of explanation in regard to them seems advisable. For such barbarous pronunciations as Thoutmes, Ahmes, Râusormâ, I have substituted Thoutmôsis, Ahmôsis, Ousimarês, a vocalisation nearer that of the ancient pronunciation. Some of the vowel sounds,[1] like those of the three names just quoted, are derived from the Greeks, or from the Egyptians of the Græco-Roman period; others are deduced by analogy with Greek transcriptions from forms the exact transliteration of which has not been preserved for us by the ancients. The reader will easily recognise the former in those where I have kept the Greek or Latin terminations *es*, *os*, or *us*, *is*, *ous*; where those terminations are wanting, the form is deduced by analogy, or determined in accordance with the rules of grammar. Thus Amenôthes (Amenhotep), Khâmois (Kha-em-uas), Harmakhis (Hor-em-Khou) are pronunciations justified by the Greek renderings; Amenemhaît (Amenemhat), Hatshopsouîtou (Hatasou, Hashepsou) are grammatical deductions. Many points are still doubtful and some of the vowel sounds will have to be modified in the future; but they have at least the merit of testifying to an effort towards the truth, and of undeceiving the public who, on the faith of the Egyptologists, accept as legitimate, pronunciations which would have been considered monstrous by the Egyptians themselves.

An error is easily corrected when it first arises, but if it is allowed to persist it is an exceedingly difficult matter to eradicate it. No better proof can be given than the persistence of the form Hatasou for the name of the great queen who shared the throne of the Pharaohs with Thoutmôsis III. For the sake of uniformity, I have adopted the orthography and vocalisation of the Græco-Roman period, in the same way as in France we use the French forms, Clovis, Clotaire, Thierry, for the Merovingian kings in order not to introduce very dissimilar words into our history books. We must, however, remember that the vocalisation and pronunciation of names do not remain unchanged during the course of history. Not to mention dialect forms which would be too difficult to determine, I established a long while ago, partly by means of the Assyrian transcriptions, that many names of which the tonic syllable is vocalised in *ô*, *ôu*, in the Greek period, have the same syllable vocalised in *â* under the second Theban empire, in the vernacular of the age of the Ramses: the Amenôthes, *i.e.*, the Amenhotep of Manethon, is Amanhatep in the inscriptions of El-Amarna. The recent discovery of Hittite archives confirms that fact, for they give among others, for the Ramses Meiamoun Ousimares of the Ptolemaic age, a Ouashmarîya Riamâsha Maiamânou which corresponds with an Egyptian pronunciation Ouasimarîya Riamasa (ou) Maiamânou. But I did not think it advisable to introduce such variants into a book intended for the general public.

[1] They should be pronounced as in French.

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A TYPICAL MIDDLE EGYPTIAN VILLAGE.

To face p. 13.

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Egypt:

Ancient Sites and Modern Scenes

I

FROM CAIRO TO RODAH

THE sky is overcast, melancholy trails of mist float over the banks of the river, and here and there yellowish patches indicate the place where the sun ought to shine. Can this really be Egypt? What has become of her light during the thirteen years I have been away? Now, it seems, we shiver on the Nile, and cannot venture on the upper deck of the boat without a warm overcoat. I left Cairo the day before yesterday, very uncertain of my impressions, and somewhat anxious to discover if the aspect of the river and its banks had changed as much as the climate. Not so long ago, in losing sight of the last minarets of the citadel, we seemed to bid farewell to the present century. A few factory chimneys were to be seen here and

there among the palm-trees, or one of Cook's steamers noisily went its way with its cargo of tourists. But such accidents of civilisation quickly disappeared on the horizon, and with the help of the Pyramids, along which we coasted for two days, we felt as if we were setting out for a corner of the antique world that had somehow lingered on in the midst of the modern world. Between Cairo and Philae we traversed an Egypt of the past, not an Egypt of any precise epoch, but a country undefined as to age and local colour, resembling in some places that of the Pharaohs, in others that of the Turks or Mamelouks ; in fact, each traveller, according to the nature of his studies, or the turn of his imagination, could believe himself to be visiting the land of the Pharaoh Sesostris, or that of the Sultans of the "Arabian Nights." For three days the landscapes of a former age have been passing before my eyes. Although I recognise their salient points, I find something in them which used not to be there, and which has modified their character. Industrial life has taken possession of them, and is secretly transforming them.

The change becomes apparent directly we leave the bridge of Kasr-en-Nil behind us. The background of the picture is the same, the green island of Rodah, with its clumps of trees and its Nilo-

meter painted in variegated colours, at its southern point, then the picturesque buildings of Old Cairo, the pretty mosque of Atar-en-Nabi, standing out so boldly on its promontory, the big mounds of débris topped by the windmills of the French occupation; and as we progress the panorama of the citadel keeps with us for about an hour. But everywhere along the bank new buildings succeed each other almost as far as Helouan opposite the site of Memphis; barracks are to be seen at intervals, chimneys smoke, and as night falls electric lights flash out to right and left. We have to realise that Cairo in growing rich has built suburbs, as is the way of all great capitals, and we must thank fortune that modern industries have been established in these beautiful spots without too greatly disfiguring them.

Beyond Helouan and Bedrechein, if we carefully follow the line of the embankments, although the changes in the outskirts are fewer, they are not the less real. On the Libyan side, the dike, which formerly showed disorderly curves and was broken here and there—and no one thought of rectifying such caprices—now runs straight, and is properly supported without breaches or indentations in the coping. Iron posts placed at regular intervals mark out the course, and allow of its being restored to its former direction when, as some-

times happens, a more violent rising of the river encroaches on it. Thanks to its stability, land which used to be constantly threatened with the depredations of the Nile has been definitely gained for cultivation, and near Bedrechein I found a field of Indian millet on exactly the same spot where I had formerly sailed in about six or nine feet of water. On the Arabian side progress has been equally great, and at first I was astonished to see verdure and groups of well-built houses where my memory told me there had been the uninterrupted yellow of the sand and a cluster of wretched hovels. From Atfieh to Bibeh, for a whole day, I ceased to observe the Libyan bank in order to concentrate my attention on the Arabian one.

On my first visit it remained almost exactly as French scholars had described it at the end of the eighteenth century. Although the hills lay far towards the interior, the space utilised was generally restricted and unequally cultivated for lack of sufficient water. Two or three fragments of canals watered it here and there, and in the spots where a little verdure was to be seen the *chadouf* or *sakieh* alone provided for the needs of the peasants at the cost of incessant labour. Nearly everywhere the desert or barren land extended to the edge of the stream; a few villages steeped in mud

occupied the most favoured spots; a santon or a dilapidated Coptic monastery might be seen at long intervals. The few attempts to revive the perishing district made under Mehemet Ali and Ismaïl Pacha had failed, and it seemed as if Egypt on that side of the river was almost dead. Now it is recovering from its long exhaustion, and nothing is more curious than to note in passing the signs of re-awakening life. At the end of the tortuous pass, where the insufficient height of the water forces the stream to flow to the south of the town of Karimât, there used to be a half-ruined monastery, Deîr-el-Mêmoun, around the walls of which dwelt a few dozen fellahs who with the monks were the only human beings who persisted in remaining in the place. About twenty ill-cared for palm-trees formed the shelter of their straw pallets, and their wretched plots of beans or millet scarcely produced a greenish film in the foreground of the landscape. Now the monastery has been repaired; stone houses are grouped round it, the palm-trees have spread and form a small wood, the fields have invaded the desert, and the stir of cattle and donkeys betrays the presence of a hard-working and prosperous population. Six or eight hamlets have grown up in the empty space which stretched from Deîr-el-

Mêmoun to El Marazi, and the colonists, partly emigrants from the other bank, are gradually conquering the desert places. The *chadouf*, worked by hand, still pumps up the water with its rhythmic movement, but at the same time fixed steam-pumps, or movable steam-engines which can be used when and where necessity arises, supplement and indeed tend to replace the old-fashioned machine. Plantations of sugar-cane are increasing, then millet, corn, beans, and on the mud left by the rising of the river the vegetables of which the native is so fond—lupins, onions, mallows, cucumbers, and water-melons—are cultivated.

Most of the new villages are of hewn stone, and the surprising increase of the buildings has necessitated the opening up of numerous quarries in all the places where the rocks are close enough to the river to make exploitation easy. Now and again occur the sheds and shafts of a budding factory, then a large farm flanked with a rudimentary garden, then clumps of young date-trees, then a number of barges moored to the quay awaiting their cargoes. One of them near Deîr-el-Bayâd carried a new steam-engine, and the sailors were hurrying to erect another engine on the bank in front of a plantation of full-grown canes.

The sun has reappeared, and Egypt is herself again. The softness of the air and the beauty of the sky invite the mind and likewise the powers of observation to idle contemplation or somnolent meditation; a real effort is required to resume my study of the right bank, and to determine to note the new and surprising changes I see there. At first, beyond Bibeh activity seems to slacken, and the former lethargy to prevail. Industry has been transported to the left bank, into the domains and factories of Daïrah Sanieh. The rugged slopes of Gebel Cheîkh Embarek come down so close to us that they exclude all possibility of irrigation by machinery, and the narrow strips of alluvium at their foot are watered and cultivated in the old-fashioned way. But beyond Charronah the view changes. A broad green track stretches for miles where I recollect a dusty plain with sickly palms and rare cultivated patches thinly scattered over it, bounded on the south by the inactive chimneys of Cheîkh-Fadl. The factory, founded in the good times of Ismaïl Pacha, was never finished. Sand accumulated at the foot of its half-built walls; iron shafts and portions of machinery, mere heaps of old iron, lay on the ground, abandoned before ever having been used. Now cultivated fields and

plantations of young trees alternate almost from Charronah, steam-pumps distribute the water regularly behind the dikes, railway lines intersect the plain, and as we passed, several steam-engines were at work on the quay, busy with the wagons of sugar-cane. Barges as heavily loaded as the trains are placed in line along the bank, engaged in unloading. Three steam-tugs, with steam up, are waiting until they have been emptied to tow them, a dozen at a time, to the villages where they have to take in a fresh cargo. It is done rapidly amidst the deafening noise that accompanies all work in this country; the sailors shout at the porters, who answer in still shriller tones, the chimneys snort, the engines pant and whistle, the donkeys bray in a common harmony. The factory itself has become unrecognisable; its workshops are finished, and as a consequence all the suitable subordinate buildings have risen from the earth. First of all comes a fine house that seems to be that of the manager. Then a sort of triumphal gate in Moorish style opens its pointed arch of horseshoe shape framed by Arabic inscriptions traced in black on a red and white ground. It stands in front of brick buildings the use of which cannot well be determined from the river. Lower down a long

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building with two rows of arcades, one on top of the other, contains shops on the ground floor, and in the upper story rooms with balconies for the employees; it might be called the social habitation of a co-operative society. I made out several shop signs: *Épicerie et café*, *Tabacs*, &c.—all in French. In fact, a French engineer, M. Mahoudeau, founded this enormous factory for the Say-Suares Company and awoke the district from its lethargy. It is no small satisfaction to note the part played by Frenchmen in the redemption of the land.

Is it, however, merely a frontage behind which the old poverty is as acute as ever? What does the fellah gain from all this wealth? Beyond Cheîkh-Fadl the landscape resumes its old physiognomy, and seems scarcely touched by modern industry. Deîr-el-Bakara has whitewashed the domes of its churches and cut convenient steps in the cliff to serve instead of the breakneck staircases by which its destitute monks descended in order to beg from the dahabiehs. The region of the ancient tombs which begins at Minieh has lost nothing of its primitive barbarism: only the masons and fellahs of the other bank have attacked the hill on all sides, and destroy it even more than they work it as a quarry. The change is nowhere more apparent than in the places

where Messrs. Cook & Co. assemble their tourists for the excursion to the tombs of Beni-Hassan; the houses there are better cared for, the inhabitants are cleaner and better clothed, and demands for bakhshîsch are universal.

II

A FOG ON THE NILE

DIRECTLY the first rays of the sun touched the Nile this morning a fog arose. Wreaths of white vapour began to pass over the water and in less than ten minutes we were enveloped in it, and had to cast anchor in the middle of the stream. It is not like a European fog, thick and heavy, which shuts out light and deadens sound. It is an aerial, fluid substance, a curtain of almost transparent muslin which the light impregnates with silvery tones, and through which every sound clearly penetrates. Life goes on around us, but invisible, and we hear it without knowing where it is. A donkey brays somewhere, a cock crows amid a chorus of clucking hens, sounds of quarrelling are heard on one of the neighbouring barges, a quail calls, and in the distance the big steamer full of tourists that we sighted at dawn whistles desperately to warn the other boats to get out of her way. Now and again the curtain is drawn aside and a

piece of landscape, floating at hazard as it seems, is discovered, but the sun, insinuating itself through the opening, warms the cold water, and so causes mists to rise which again engulf us. After about an hour there is some movement in the fog; it becomes less dense, is stretched out, is torn in pieces, and flies off in shreds, which are soon destroyed and finally vanish in the twinkling of an eye. The world reappears in a chaos of uncertain forms, which, however, become more clearly defined every second. Five women emerge on a narrow mass of brown earth, busy with their water-jars. An embankment is visible behind them, and rises steeply in graduated terraces of vegetation; it ends in a dike above which the tops of palm-trees are seen, and almost simultaneously we perceive the line of hills, pink in colour, outlined against the background of the opaline sky. For a few minutes the remains of the fog soften the contours, bring out the shadows, accentuate the reliefs, and lightly touching the various objects, clearly mark out the sites they occupy. As the mist evaporates the relief is softened, the contours become sharp and clear-cut, distances are effaced. It seems as if objects on the far-off horizon are thrown forward, and that the foreground and the objects on it approach

and, indeed, almost join it, and that they are placed one upon the other just as they appear in the pictures which decorate the walls of the tombs of Memphis or of Thebes.

Indeed, who is there who has sailed on the Nile, even for only a couple of days, who does not come to realise how closely the scenes drawn by the old Egyptians on their monuments resemble those of to-day, and how faithfully they interpreted them, even in those of their conventions which seem to us to depart farthest from reality?

The fog having entirely lifted, the dahabieh continues its way. The boatmen row vigorously, keeping the strokes in time with the voice of the singer:—

Fi'r-rodh ra'et—hebbi'l-gamîl.
(In the garden I saw—my handsome friend.)

And all repeat in chorus with a low, drawling intonation, *Hebbi'l-gamîl.* Before they have finished, the soloist attacks the high notes of the sacramental refrain, *ia lêl* (O night!). He indulges in shakes, prolongs the sounds, swells them, stifles them, and then, out of breath, stops the last note with a single dry sound. He is almost choked by his runs and trills, and while the crew are bursting with applause I observe the river and the two banks. Low down in a

line on a bank of tawny-coloured sand a number of big vultures are warming themselves in the sun; with claws spread out, backs bent, necks driven down into the shoulders, wings folded in front on each side of the breast, they joyfully receive the flood of sunshine which spreads over their feathers and penetrates them with its warmth. It is exactly how the old sculptors represented the vulture of Nekhabît in repose, the goddess-protector of the Pharaohs, who shelters them with her wings. In imagination, take out the biggest of the group, put the pschent or the white cap on its head, the sceptre of power in its talons, place it in profile on the tuft of full-blown lotus which symbolises Upper Egypt, and you will have the bas-relief which adorns one of the sides of the principal doors of the temple of Khonsou, and yet under all this apparatus a veritable vulture; for the covering of religious attributes has not suppressed the real bird. A fishing eagle comes and goes above our heads in quest of his morning meal. He describes immense circles, slowly beating the air, then suddenly lets himself drift along, leaning on his wings, his body suspended between them, his feet stretched out, his head bent, his eyes searching the depths of the water. Watching him progress thus, scarcely moving at all, he resembles a hawk

of the Theban sculptors, Horus, who hovers above the helmet of the Pharaoh in battle, or who, displayed on the ceilings of the temples, dominates the sweep of the central nave from the doors of the hypostyle to those of the sanctuary. When presently he descends and rises again with his prey, it will be with the same gesture and bearing with which Horus in battle manipulated his mystical fly-net and his ring symbolic of eternity. A troop of donkeys coming out of a hollow behind the embankment under a load of well-filled sacks might be the very one that served as model to the draughtsmen of the tomb of Ti for the carrying in of the harvest. The mingled flock of sheep and goats which follows at a gentle trot stand out with so exact a profile, that they seem to be solely composed of moving silhouettes; it is indeed a picture come down from its ancient wall to go to the neighbouring market. And as the banks pass before me with their episodes of contemporary life, it seems to me that the bas-reliefs of the tombs have become alive and of natural size; there are the oxen going to the fields with measured tread, the ploughing, the fishermen yoked to their net, the carpenters building a barge. They have installed their ladders on a sloping piece of shore, and crouching in the attitudes of monkeys, nail the timbers with blows of the hammer.

The creators of Egyptian art took the Nile for their point of view when they set to work to put these isolated objects together, and to engrave them harmoniously in the chapels of the tombs in order to ensure their dead continuation of earthly existence for an indefinite period. They placed all that characterised life on the river itself or on the canals at the bottom of the wall—the convoys of laden boats, the disputes of the sailors, the fishing scenes, the hunting of water-fowl. Above came the seasons of the agricultural year —ploughing, sowing, reaping, threshing, storing in the granaries. Higher still came the pastures with ruminating oxen, and above, almost touching the ceiling, the desert and the hunters on the track of the gazelle. The panorama widens out or is closed in according to the extent of the surface to be covered, and all the elements which compose it are not necessarily reproduced everywhere; one part is suppressed here, or developed there, or combined elsewhere, but what is used follows the invariable order from bottom to top. The variations of the ancient theme were forming and changing every moment under my eyes as the day advanced. In some places the river is deserted and its banks empty, but the ploughs make furrows in the plain, and the hills show their cold slopes above them. A little farther

on the hills sink behind the horizon, and the plain seems a flat, empty space without vegetation or visible habitations. Three or four miles higher up stream the Nile becomes suddenly animated and a long series of boats cross each other, and are driven back or thrust gaily forward by the north wind. But the surfaces on which life circulates, instead of falling back one behind the other, seem to rise one above the other as in the works of the old masters, who certainly both simplified and complicated the different subjects they chose to bring together. They almost all made it a rule not to attempt to depict the ground, substituting for it a single straight line on which the persons included in the same scene moved and by which they were supported. In the upper rows they depict scenes that distance did not permit them to perceive any more than it does us, despite the incredible transparency of the air, and they attribute to them the same proportions as those of the scenes in the lower rows. These defects were imposed on them by the ritual of their religion. Were not these pictures, so carefully and accurately executed, really magic charms on the composition of which depended the survival of a human being after death? The slightest error might imperil the destiny of the *double*, and so the artists were obliged to sacrifice

the probabilities of perspective to minute truth of detail.

The dahabieh goes on its way, and the singer, grown tired, pauses to take breath, but his companions brutally recall him to his duty. "You are paid fifty piastres more than us to sing, and you want to rest: go on, open your mouth, and use your voice." He allowed himself to be implored for a few minutes and then began again:—

"In the garden I saw—my handsome friend,
Who was gently swaying—like the branch of
the nabeca,"

and the crew repeats:—

"like the leaf of the nabeca.
Permit and grant—O my beloved,
And fulfil thy promises for the best."

On the bank the men on the barges at anchor, the carpenters, the donkey-boys, the women drawing water, leave off their work and listen; when the refrain is reached their delight bursts forth in enthusiastic exclamations of "Ah!" or of "Allah! Allah!—Blessed be thy mother, O thou man of songs!—May our divine master guard thee! Again, again, and again may the benediction of the Prophet fall on you!" We advance

to the sounds of the general jubilation, and with approving laughter our boatmen respond to the benedictions which rain on them from the bank. The tune is slow, sweet, somewhat sad, adapted to the rhythm of the oars; it has undergone no change during the five-and-twenty years I have known it, and it must certainly have been transmitted intact for generations. It must have been sung with Egyptian words when Egypt had Pharaohs, and perhaps Ramses II. heard it when, returning from his Syrian campaigns, he regained victorious Thebes in triumph.

III

THE CONVENT OF THE PULLEY AT GEBEL-ABOU-FEDÂ

A LITTLE before Omm-el-Kouçour the cliff is broken, and through the opening appears a row of red and white tombs dominated by a wall of greyish bricks supported against the rock. It is a furtive apparition, vanishing almost as soon as perceived, but so strange that it leaves a permanent impression on the mind. Once, four years ago, I wanted to approach it, but I arrived at nightfall, and my boatmen told me stories of ghouls lying in wait in the mountain fastnesses; it would be all up with our lives if we dared to land after sunset; perhaps even we were not safe on the Nile aboard the dahabieh. I respected their fears, and agreed to wait till the next day. But the captain put off at dawn, while I was still asleep, and I was obliged to postpone the visit.

I have now[1] just accomplished it, thanks to a fresh northerly breeze which forced us to put

[1] February, 1906.

in here. It was half-past two in the afternoon, and porters on the bank were loading boats with rough stone. As neither ghouls nor *afrîtes* care to risk themselves in the sun, no one was afraid or refused to accompany me. The ouady is not more than 100 yards wide. It extends northwards for about 1,500 yards, then divides into two branches, one running straight to the south parallel with the river, while the other slants to the north-east and is lost in the desert. Twenty years ago there were ancient quarries on the southern slope which were visible from the shore: they have now been destroyed. Most of the Græco-Roman tombs which prolonged the line of the quarries towards the interior have also been destroyed; one, however, still stands, on which the remains of a resurrection scene may be distinguished, an Anubis under the mask of a jackal, and a Nephthys on guard over a mummy lying on its funeral bed. The hill stood out sharply, and the stone lay scattered about in broad white slabs, stained with black where the chambers of the mine had exploded. How many more summers will it spread itself in the sun? A few seasons of defective exploitation have miserably devastated what twenty centuries had respected, and has spoiled, almost wantonly, one of the most original landscapes of Egypt.

At close quarters the cemetery does not preserve the picturesque aspect it had at a distance. It had long been deserted when the Copts reoccupied it in the middle of the nineteenth century. At first they came one at a time, at long intervals; then, fashion aiding, the notables of the villages built on the western bank of the river held it an honour to repose there, as if in ground sanctified by the bones of holy monks. The convoy arrives in several boats, lands noisily, and as soon as it is disembarked the procession is formed, the clergy with the cymbals and big drum which accompany the cadence of the liturgical prayers, the hand-bier covered with its purple pall, the family and friends in ceremonial garments, the women methodically dishevelled, and ready to howl at the first signal. The tombs are arranged on the same principle as those of the Musulmans. For the poor, a mere hole, or at best a shallow trench walled up with dry bricks, both covered with a heap of earth or pebbles, a stone set up at the head and feet. A step higher in the social scale, the irregular mound becomes a bank, a rectangular brick *mastaba*, bare or hastily covered with whitewash. For families in easy circumstances there are veritable concessions in perpetuity. The tomb is placed in the midst of a brick framework surmounted by a cylindrical vault, also of brick, the height of which is some-

times a little over 6 feet. The narrow faces remind us of the arched stelæ of the Pharaonic age, and on one of them, most often the west face, the mason designs in burnt bricks the Greek cross, the monogram of Christ, a crown, a lozenge. The rich have enclosures where they are immured in pomp when their days on earth are ended. Neither battlements with rounded embrasures nor domed chapels, as in Musulman cemeteries, are to be seen. They include tombs for the master, his wife, his brothers, his children. Everything is crowded together in disorder, and the low mound of the poor man is found side by side with the brand-new mausoleum of the proprietor of a hundred feddans. The most ancient sepulchres are crowded together near the river. When there was no longer room there, they spread quickly towards the east; now they very nearly touch the bottom of the valley.

When the monks settled there, probably at the beginning of the sixth century, they took up their abode in the pagan tombs on the southern slope, and they adapted one of the hollowed-out quarries on the northern slope as a church. It comprised a part open to the sky, forming an esplanade, and two or three subterranean chambers supported by pillars cut out of the rock; these were devoted to divine worship, and they built a wall round

them strong enough to protect them in case of a sudden attack. Repeatedly destroyed, the Deîr has always been restored, and was lately entirely rebuilt by a rich personage whom local tradition calls the Emir Tadrous. From without it is a mass of bricks leaning up against the rock, and pierced on the south side by five dormer windows placed high up. The door opens at right angles at the southern extremity of the west face, a bay just large enough to admit one man; then come two steps in the masonry, a heavy wooden swing-door, a steep slope enclosed by two massive buildings. The courtyard is bordered by buildings on three sides, some of which still stand, while others have been razed to the ground; on the north side are benches on which visitors or guards spent the night, then vaulted chambers, of which one, occupying the corner of the rocky wall and of the western curtain, contains a bakery and kitchen stoves, while the others were used for storing forage and provisions. The use of the small chambers along the southern side is uncertain; in one of them are four water-jars, and perhaps another may have served as a lavatory. In the middle, the ground has lately been trampled; it is sprinkled with asses' dung. In one corner is a heap of ashes round the stones of a rustic fireplace; bread has been baked there, and some one has watched the

fire. Have the coastguardsmen encamped there on one of their rounds ? or quarrymen who were prevented returning home by an unfavourable wind ? or some of the faithful from the opposite shore to celebrate a festival or pray for their dead ? The natives are little sensible of the picturesque interest of the place, and the beauty of the spot of itself would not be sufficient either to bring them or to keep them there. And yet the view from here, although perhaps not one of the most beautiful, has an irresistible charm for a European : at our feet are the tombs, of a funereal whiteness, the ouady intersected with little streams, the result of the January rains, then the violated hypogeums, the hill with its bruised and peeled surface, a glimpse of the shining Nile, the coming and going of barges with sails set, an embankment striped with black and green, a line of trees, a background of rose-coloured hills, and spread over all the wonderful light of Egypt that harmonises the most discordant tones and makes them pleasing to the eye.

A brick screen bars the entrance to the quarry, up to about 2 feet 8 inches from the ceiling. It is adorned half-way up with a lozenge and a cross in burnt bricks, the red colour standing out against the dull-grey of the bare earth. The little rough, low door which shelters itself under the cross is

entirely covered with iron and bristles with big nails. The key is probably to be found on the other bank, five or six miles from here, but it is always possible to make a compromise with Oriental locks: one of the boatmen pulls to the right, pushes to the left, gives the lower corner two or three blows with his fist, invokes the name of the Prophet, and there we are in the church. The Coptic architects had not greatly altered the work of the heathens. They preserved the two pillars which supported the ceiling, and behind, on the great axis of the building, they built a rectangular enclosure pierced on the west by the ritual doors: it is the *hekal*, the sanctuary, with three niches in which the altar is set up and the priest performs the Mass. It is covered with the inevitable whitewash, to which time gives the creamy tones of old ivory, and it, as well as the pillars, is adorned with red crosses and interlaced ornaments like those found as headings of chapters in the elaborate evangelistaries of the tenth and eleventh centuries. There is space enough between the *hekal* and the pillars and then between the pillars and the façade to resemble the plan of the ordinary basilica, and to allow us to imagine in a sort of way the nave and the narthex. With some crowding a small number of the faithful would have been able to get in at the moment of the

Communion ; the rest of the congregation would have had to remain in the broad corridor that surrounded the sanctuary. Behind the altar, benches had been cut in the rock, and also a small chamber which seemed to be used as a sacristy. On the south wall opposite the door a staircase with uneven steps led to a sort of curtain along the east wall almost under the ceiling. An irregular fissure allowed it to communicate on the south with a long, low, narrow chamber, which obtained light at the side from three dormer windows opening on to the ouady. It was a half-formed gallery that the monks, when they appropriated the rest, omitted to use. It acted as a sort of ventilating shaft, and the air it took in kept the atmosphere of the Holy of Holies pure and fresh. Although the church was nearly always shut up, it lacked the feeling of heaviness and suffocation so disagreeable in most of the crypts of Christian Egypt.

A common lantern of cut tin and clouded glass hung between the two pillars ; a three-legged wooden stool was upside down in a corner, near a fragment of ragged straw matting. There was neither furniture nor table utensils to tempt the cupidity of a thief or excite the rage of a fanatic. When a service was held, a circumstance that only occurred three or four times a year,

the priest brought the necessary material with him. The rest of the time the church was deserted, but its bareness does not give a sense of melancholy. Daily life must be hard for the unfortunate men whom the religious vocation has exiled to this corner of the desert. It is cold there in winter, when the north wind takes up its abode in the ouady and sweeps it in gusts; and in summer the heat is torrid and the nights bring no relief from the tortures of the day. The monks, ill-clothed, worse fed, weakened by the excessive fasting that the rule prescribes, each isolated in his hypogeum among the relics and memorials of pagan death, endure the same torments as did the hermits of the Theban laures. The mummies whose dwellings they have seized return to life, and relate the history of their damnation. Satyrs and monsters arise in front of them and try to lead them away into the desert. Unchaste fairies offer themselves to them in all the glory of their tempting beauty, and sometimes while they are meditating on the Scriptures demons, expert in theological subtleties, suddenly confront them with the most captious objections. After these infernal struggles the church is their harbour of refuge. The evil spirit does not dare to follow them there, and during the respite he is forced to

grant them, they strengthen their minds for future assaults by conversing with their spiritual fathers and brothers or in communion with the Lord. I am told that demoniacal temptations are still sometimes experienced in the convents on the borders of the Red Sea. The time for such things is over in our case; but the sense of having once again found the peace that was the possession of the monks of old still persists, and so strongly, that even the passing stranger is affected by it. It steals on us without our knowledge, penetrates us, and when, as the first shades of evening draw on, we quit the convent we carry something of the feeling back with us to the dahabieh.

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IV

THE CROCODILE GROTTO AT MAABDEH

THE caves which the eddies of the river have bored in the low-lying rocks of Abou-Fedâ sheltered the last crocodiles of Middle Egypt. Thirty years ago we might count twenty: to-day there are none. Have the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages killed them one by one, or have the creatures secretly emigrated southwards in order to join their Nubian cousins? No one would suspect in what numbers they had swarmed in this district, if we did not possess the proof in the thousands and thousands of mummies the remains of which fill the hypogeum of Maabdeh.

If we desire to visit it we must disembark at Chekalkîl. The embankment is so high that it entirely shuts out any view of the country beyond, and does not allow us to estimate the distance that separates the hill from the Nile. In stepping ashore it would seem to be scarcely more than one or two hundred yards, but as

soon as we reach the top of the high bank we see that we are far out in our reckoning. A broad, deep plain is revealed, varied in aspect and in vegetation: we see much corn, much barley, helbeh, flowering beans, the sweet and delicate scent of which permeates the morning freshness, chickpeas, lupins, clover, but all weakly and poor, for in the last two winters[1] the rising of the river was insufficient, and the ground does not yield its usual crops. A part of the fodder has already been cut for lack of water for irrigation, or the cattle have been turned on to it before it should become burnt up. We meet a vanguard of goats and kids straggling along, with swaying ears, led by two little girls. Farther on, about forty tethered buffaloes and cows are feeding, and they leave off in order to study us.

The herdsman, an enormous bearded fellow who spends his leisure in spinning wool, cannot get over his astonishment at seeing so many Europeans together. Much surprised at our sudden appearance, he greets us gravely with a *salam aleikoum*, as if we were Musulmans. Two sleek asses' foals who are gambolling round him leave him, and after smelling at us for a minute determine to accompany us to the village, and

[1] 1902–3.

gallop, braying, kicking, and shaking their comical ears with all the joy befitting their youth. My guide assures me that they are own nephews of my donkey, and in their gambols he discerns a touching sign of family concord.

Maabdeh has increased greatly in the last twenty years. It formerly consisted of two or three groups of wretched hovels separated by mounds of dirt and evil-smelling pools. The Maazeh Bedouins prowled about on the outskirts, stealing the cattle and pillaging the crops; sometimes, even, if they chanced to meet a woman or child alone, they carried them off to their tents and did not restore them. The supervision that has been exercised over them since that time has forced them to give up these evil habits. Those who did not prefer to withdraw to the desert bought land, and have become improvised agriculturists: they meet their former victims as friends, and instead of plundering them, buy their sheep, or ask their daughters' hands in marriage. But the memory of their raids lingers sufficiently for the fellahs to continue to take precautions against any return of their savage customs. The new houses are built of burnt bricks to a height of about 5 feet, so as to prevent sapping, and then above that base rises a wall of unburnt bricks,

AN UPPER EGYPTIAN PEASANT.

To face p. 44.

without projection or opening, to the point where the light ladders in common use in the district reach. The wall would defy the Bedouins' assaults for two or three days at least, certainly long enough for the police stationed in the neighbourhood to come to the rescue. Maabdeh presents the common type of the villages of Upper Egypt, narrow winding alleys, rubbish-heaps, a litter of dung and dry dourah straw, troops of half-wild dogs who wander listlessly round in quest of bones, or sleep stretched across the path, and growl, but without disturbing themselves, under our donkeys' hoofs. To right and left through the half-open doors may be seen the usual interior—a little irregular-shaped courtyard, with its bench of beaten earth, a few coarse earthen vessels scattered about in one corner, the fireplace, the heavy water-jar that the women have filled at the river that morning, hens pecking, children crying, and at the back the recess into which the whole family crowd each night for sleeping. It is disorder and dirt in all its hideousness, but it is not want, although the inundation had been far from satisfactory and the cholera had raged. The people live in these hovels because it is an inveterate habit: they lived so six thousand and more years ago under the reign of Menes, and what was good enough

for the fathers is good enough for the sons from generation to generation. The canal which bounds the village on the east is almost everywhere empty, and the little water it contains is concentrated in greenish spots in the hollowest parts of the bed. The flocks and herds bathe in it, the children paddle in it, the women wash the clothes in it, and, if they have no time to go down to the Nile, draw water from it for drinking and cooking purposes. The donkeys refuse to touch it with the tips of their lips, but men drink it without flinching, to die like flies in the autumn at a period of epidemic. Beyond lies the cemetery round its cheîkh with a greyish cupola, and its two or three family tombs with low, slightly crenellated walls, its rows of nameless graves scarcely marked by a fragment of stone at the head, and then behind the cemetery the ascent begins.

The base of the hill is set in a sort of moraine, through which beds of bright limestone appear more and more frequently as we ascend: they soon stand right out and form a sort of vast staircase, the steps of which are joined by inclined planes of débris and sand. At the bottom of the ascent the quarrymen have lately brought to light two or three vaults, rough, low-ceilinged, narrow, without either inscriptions

or sculpture, furnished with *loculi*, in which the mummies formerly lay: violated at the Roman epoch, a Greek cross drawn in red on the wall at the back proves that they served for the retreat of Christian hermits. A little higher up a bed of limestone of finer quality than the rest was worked in ancient times, and the silhouette of the blocks, as well as the marks of the chisels that cut them out, are everywhere clearly defined. Higher up still, a mass of rock stands out, and forms a spur surmounted by two or three peaks of fantastic, broken, jagged shape, and so worn away at the base that they are right out of the perpendicular, and we expect to see them collapse every moment. To avoid them the path slants towards the north, and then ascends in zigzag the long side of the hill for about five or six hundred yards before reaching the edge of the plateau. The slope is steep, the heat, intensified by the limestone wall by the side of which we walked, envelops us and slowly bakes us; near the summit at the last turn a fresh breeze strikes our faces, and an immense panorama is suddenly displayed at our feet—the green and yellow plain, the villages hidden among the palms, the Nile winding in large curves, the water whipped into frothy waves

by the wind, the towns on the other bank—Manfalout, El-Hawatka, Kawali—white and grey round their minarets; then in the extreme distance the hill of Siout projects its profile, delicately tinted with pink and lilac, on to the horizon. Innumerable sounds rise up to us: the song of the workman manipulating his *chadouf*, the greeting of a couple of passers-by who meet on the canal quay, the bleating of sheep, the laughter of a band of women who have come to draw water, the shrill whistle of a tug desperately panting with a convoy of sugar-canes. The atmosphere of Egypt, which causes every object to stand out in sharp outline, does not allow of the mingling of sounds any more than it does of the various parts of the landscape. It gives each sound its full value, and if it somewhat tones down the discords, it never brings them into the harmony that country sounds in Europe acquire in summer-time.

A short gallop to the right, and in two minutes the whole of the view opening on to the valley is again shut out by a screen of rock. The plateau unrolls itself before us in slow and supple rhythmical movements which melt insensibly on the east into the mass of the Arabian hills. Everywhere the ground sparkles and shines as if it was crystal or salt: as a matter of fact it is only talc in small

pieces, the waste of a quarry formerly worked by the Egyptians, and that they thought to be exhausted, but where modern industry would perhaps still find large supplies. The path slants across this carpet of luminous dust, winding over the slope at its own sweet will without seeming to bring us any nearer to our goal. But at last, after half an hour, our guide shows us a cleft, the shape of which is defined on the rock as a triangle. It is from 9 to 12 feet long, and almost half-closed up by a block of stone thrown across it on the side of the base. Ignorant of the real entrance, that is the way to get into the Crocodile Grotto. Most tourists just glance at the opening and depart: only archæologists persist, although even for them the interest of the visit scarcely compensates for the fatigue it engenders. We catch on to the rough places, placing a foot here and a foot there, for a depth of 12 to 15 feet, and at first encounter the sickening odour of damp mummy that has slowly fermented. At the back, towards the left, under the transverse block there is a smoky vent-hole into which the guide had already thrown himself, candle in hand. It is a veritable fox-hole which widens out and narrows again at every turn, sometimes scarcely 3 feet high, sometimes so narrow that stout travellers can only just slip through with a somewhat severe rubbing. You

have to make your way as best you can: on your knees, or your side, or your back, or your stomach, crawling, twisting, sliding to right and left. The bad smell increases; the air is rarefied and seems sticky, so impregnated is it with dust of pitch or bitumen; the heat is insufferable: it takes five minutes, and they seem interminable, to reach the first gallery of the hypogeum.

It is neither spacious nor sweet-smelling, but we can at least stand upright and move without knocking our heads against the ceiling. It adjoins other galleries, the windings and entwinings of which form as tangled a maze as that of the Catacombs of Rome. The Arabs tell fearsome tales o tourists who, venturing in alone, were never able to regain the entrance, and died of thirst or exhaustion. They believe the grotto to be haunted by ghouls or *afrîtes*, for whom the flesh and blood of a European are an unparalleled feast, and they firmly believe that the lost travellers were eaten alive by that cursed brood of God and His Prophet. It would be interesting to get them to describe the creatures on the actual scene of their exploits, but if we ventured to approach the subject our guides would be capable of running away on the spot and leaving us to shift for ourselves. Once inside the labyrinth, the ghouls prowl round us, seeking whom to devour, and merely to utter their name would

be to incite them to attack us. We proceed then in silence, examining the place as well as the dim light of our candles allows. On my first visit, twenty years ago,[1] crocodile mummies abounded, not only the giant crocodiles that are to be seen in the necropolises of the Fayoum or of Kom-Ombo, but young crocodiles who died a few days or a few hours after their birth. They were buried singly or in bundles, and then piled up so as entirely to fill the secondary corridors. Indeed, the grave-diggers scarcely preserved a track in the principal galleries, in order to make it possible to inspect the condition of the mummies. Now and again we came upon a few human mummies, those of the priests of the god Sovkou and of the faithful who had specially consecrated themselves to him. They had to pay dear for the privilege of lying for ever among the incarnations of their mystic patron. What gave them all, men or beasts, a special value, is that they were often covered with papyri, notarial acts, private letters, receipts, discharges, circulars, administrative circulars, and also torn or odd volumes of the Greek classical writers. Mr. Harris owed to them, sixty years ago, fragments of Homer, and leaves of a manuscript containing the lost orations of Hyperides, the Athenian. Is there not a chance of finding

[1] This was written in 1903.

more important works still, those of Sappho or Alcman? About 1890, Arab excavators, encouraged by the European scholars, surreptitiously made their way into the grotto and damaged what had escaped the injury of centuries. They ripped up the large mummies and crushed the small ones. One day, in the midst of their operations, two of them upset one of the wretched petroleum lamps they are accustomed to use to light themselves over the débris. We can imagine with what swiftness the fire would spread in that heap of rags and organic matter saturated with natron and pitch. Legend has it that a long while ago an Englishman and his dragoman perished in the flames caused by his carelessness, and the men accompanying me declare that two Bedouins met a similar fate. Whether the tale be true or not, there are lying about everywhere fragments of linen scorched, or reduced to tinder, carbonised mummies, calcined bones. The ceiling and the side walls are covered with a kind of greasy soot which sometimes falls and shrivels up in the flame of our candles. The guide assures us that he knows the whereabouts of the real door, the door through which the Egyptians took the corpses, but the débris that has been heaped up against it forms so thick a covering that it would cost a mint of money to remove it, more money certainly than

it was worth. He suggests taking us to it, but the indecision of his manner proves to us that he does not much like the job. Later, when we shall have returned to the upper air, he will declare that some sort of unnameable thing had stirred behind us in the darkness, doubtless an evil spirit animated by the worst intentions. For a quarter of an hour he demonstrated to us that it was far off, very far, and that our three candles were half consumed. It was a good reason, and besides, we had seen enough to be assured that archæology had little to hope from so devastated a site. We found our way out then on all-fours. A little light filters under the rock, there is the opening of the vent-hole, the cleft, a triangle of blue sky above our heads, then the full light of day. We are tugged and pulled on to the platform, winking our eyes like owls, but, all said and done, delighted with our expedition to the crocodiles.

It is pleasant to see the sun again and to breathe freely the wholesome north wind, but it is unexpected and flattering to receive military honours on coming out of a mummy-hole. While we were exploring the grotto the older of the two omdehs who divide the government of Maabdeh, learning that the Director of the Service des Antiquités was visiting the place *incognito*, had sent the local armed force with mani-

fold excuses for the rheumatism which prevented him from coming himself. It consisted of six ghafirs in blue shirts, black caps with red bands, and carrying percussion guns. Salutations, presentation of arms, and we are forced to make a dignified descent into the plain, not like simple travellers free in their movements, but like distinguished persons hemmed in by the most rigorous etiquette. The omdeh awaited us at his house to offer us the traditional coffee, and to refuse his invitation would wound him. He lives in the largest of the new houses we had admired in passing in the morning. The doorway, hidden in the south-west corner of the outer wall, took us into a corridor running between two blind walls; at the end towards the left a bay was cut in it, through which we reached the court of honour. The house itself has a verandah in front, the steps up to it being framed between two bronze candelabra. It is arranged on the usual plan with a vestibule lighted by stained-glass windows, a drawing-room furnished with divans, and behind, a reception-room furnished in the European fashion. Before returning to his native village our host had lived for some years in Cairo, where he filled a small post in a Government office. He brought back courteous manners and a flowery language, which contrast with the rusticity of his surroundings. He

possesses I do not know how many feddans of good land between Maabdeh and Abnoub, and although not as profitable as he could wish, he is not on the whole dissatisfied. While we drink his coffee, smacking our lips out of politeness, he informs us that despite the poorness of the inundation the year has not been altogether a bad one. His cows and ewes were fruitful, his daughters-in-law presented him with three fine boys a few weeks back, and no member of the family has fallen a victim to cholera. His house is warm in winter, cool in summer, and now that we have honoured him with our visit misfortune will not dare to touch it and prosperity will dwell there for all time.

V

A CAB DRIVE IN SIOUT

FORMERLY to reach Siout you landed at the hamlet of El Hamra. There was nothing to distinguish El Hamra from all the numerous villages hitherto encountered: the port was merely the dike, more or less worn down by the coming and going of the crowd, but bigger craft than almost anywhere else were moored there, pleasure dahabiehs awaiting their hirers for the season, two or three steamers, coal barges, the post boats, and working alone in its corner was the indefatigable dredging machine of the Ibrahimieh Canal. The river had its caprices, sometimes hugging the banks, sometimes throwing up heaps of sand at their base, and so separating the banks from the boatmen. From 1883 to 1885 this improvised shore was two or three hundred yards wide, but the inundation of 1885 swept it away at one stroke and brought back the traffic to the bank. A good road, shady and winding, led the traveller first to the post-office, then to the railway station, and

thence to the town. It ended with a bridge over the winding canal which surrounded Siout, and those who know the Egypt of those days by means of photographs will have admired the pretty picture it offered: its houses and gardens reflected in the still waters of the canal, the bridge with its unequal arches, the group of thick sycamores which shaded the gateway of the Moudirieh, the Moudirieh itself with its oblong courtyard planted with trees, the clerks running from office to office, papers in hand and pen behind the ear, and the motley crowd which went its way unmindful of the administrative work. But all that is of the past. The enlargement of the Ibrahimieh Canal, the building of the dike, and the displacement of the mud that has resulted, have all been fatal to the old port; small boats still use it, but the vessels of the navigation companies, the coal barges, the post boats, the dahabiehs—all that made the life of El Hamra—have been transported to the other extremity of the roadstead, to the south-east point almost opposite El Ouastah.[1]

The first thing we notice in getting alongside are the cabs prowling about round the landing-

[1] The above was written in 1899. But since the completion of the barrage in 1902 the traffic has gone back towards the north and is now at nearly the same point as it was thirty years ago.

places. They are the little Parisian victorias with movable hood, leathern apron, and flap-seat at the back, two lean horses, and a numbered driver; the price of the drive is 3 francs 75 centimes, if we are satisfied to keep to the town; 5 francs if we venture among the hills to visit the tombs. Donkey-boys still abound, pushing and shouting, but they no longer assume the haughty insolence of a former day; they feel that their reign is ending, and they are humble in the hope of carrying off a customer despite the competition. But usually nothing comes of their efforts at civility. A cab is called, four people crowd into it, holding on as best they can, and the equipage sets out by the grace of God. At first you drive by the river along the towing-path between the edge of a field of ragged dourah and the sloping embankment. There is a prospect of a fall of 6 or 9 feet at every jerk made by the horses, and for ten minutes the carriage rolls, pitches, jumps over the irrigation posts and trenches, has a narrow escape of losing a back wheel, heels over, is about to upset, when by the grace of the unknown saint who presides over the safety of cabs in Egypt, it escapes for that time. After five or six minutes of this preliminary exercise we turn to the left and proceed towards the town at a trot through the boatmen's quarter, a row of houses in process of building, two or three

bacals piled up with preserves, petroleum, and cotton goods, a *Sudanese bar* dripping with raki and adulterated spirits, painted, unveiled women in loud-coloured garments, an open-air cookshop where stews of doubtful appearance simmer with a seasoning of dust. Next comes an empty space, the haunt of wandering dogs and hens, then a wealthy suburb with blue, pink, apple-green, or yellow villas inhabited chiefly by Copts, gardens, cafés, restaurants, hotels with French, Greek, or Italian names, and at last the railway. Two goods trains are manœuvring on a siding by a caravan of camels loaded with sugar-canes, and the 5.55 train for Minieh whistles loudly as it departs.

Beyond there are more villas, more restaurants, more hotels, and of a sudden we come on the entry to Old Siout, disfigured by European embellishments. One side of the canal is dry, the gateway of the Moudirieh has been pulled down to make way for the traffic, but the courtyard remains as before, and the town has changed very little. The sloping street that fits on, as it were, to the back of the Moudirieh is exactly as I knew it in 1881, and if the alleys to the left in the direction of the hill have been widened, the new buildings are in the usual Arab style and do not clash with the old ones. The carriage scarcely lessens its pace when driving through

them, but the crowd, as distrustful as that of Cairo in regard to the talents of the drivers, keeps well out of our way. A sudden turn and we are in the market-place, still crowded with men and beasts, and then the curved jetty by which the tombs are approached, the bridge partly built on the piles of the Mamelouk Bridge, known to the soldiers of Desaix and the scholars of the Commission; there on the right beyond the canal the palm-tree and cupolas of the Musulman cemetery, and here—but what has happened to the hill? A sort of grey and white factory is fastened to it half-way up, the slope is dotted with rubbish, a big iron pipe, partly hidden by the débris, climbs it, quarry holes are to be seen almost everywhere, and lime-kilns smoke at the base on the road to Dronkah. The Water Company has taken possession of it and has formed its reservoirs there. The slaughter-house has been installed below against the first modern tombs. The ancient tombs have been saved from the contractors, but not without difficulty; each has its iron railing, its number, its door, and a Bedouin, also numbered, keeps the keys for the use of tourists.

The day draws to a close. The last visitors to the cemetery wend their way back to the town, and with them the bands of chained convicts who are working in the quarries under the sur-

veillance of a squad of police. The traditional cannon-shot has just announced the end of the fast for the day. The streets swarm with people, and the shopkeepers, who had been slightly drowsy from hunger during the heavy hours of the afternoon, become lively again before closing for the night. The large bazaar has preserved its original physiognomy, and perhaps corresponds better than those of Cairo to the idea of an Oriental market, since it has so little of the European or Levantine element. Wooden planks, as formerly, roof in the whole length of the principal avenue and even some of the by-streets. It used to be a matter of some difficulty to traverse it on a donkey, and you had to manage the beast with a certain skill so as not to upset the flat baskets which encumbered the path to right and left; now, however, the drivers rush into it with their fares as if it was a deserted street. It is true they go at a walking pace, and the shopkeepers make use of their circumspection to offer their wares to the Europeans. One man addresses himself to the ladies and shakes out before them veils in a sort of black net embroidered and spangled with gold or copper, silver or nickel. They cost a mere nothing, a couple of guineas each, and it is indeed only to be agreeable to you that the price is made so low; but do not offer him 20 francs in the hope of

getting rid of him by so extravagant a discount; he would end by taking you at your word and would gain more than half the object's real value. Another offers fly-flaps of ivory or ebony incrusted with gold or silver and touched up with vermilion. Yet another draws your attention to the beauty of the vases he makes, the pretty vases varnished red and black, most of which are servile copies of a French or Viennese model in metal. Still the carriage manages to push its way along, leaving a space of scarcely 1 foot 8 inches between the wheel and the stalls, along which the crowd of foot-passengers make their way with difficulty. Now and again a man hemmed in in his booth becomes quietly impatient, and asks them in a low voice to get out of the way, or a lounger pinned by the axle kicks out and curses, according to the Arab formula, the father of the tiresome person who is crushing him. But such impatience is rare, and the crowd, accommodating itself as well as it can to such hindrances, takes an interest in the discussions of its fellow-citizens with their chance customers. Think of some idle tourist blocking one of the business thoroughfares of London or Paris for half an hour, and then imagine, if you can, the temper of the tradesmen who inhabit it.

THE NILE, NEAR ASSOUÂN.

To face p. 63.

VI

ON THE NILE

The Nile goes and comes and winds in immense curves through the plain, and the current, rebounding from one side to the other, leaves bare a sandy shore on the bank from which it recedes and pitilessly eats its way into the bank on which it encroaches. The bank thus continually eaten away is perpetually crumbling under the strain; whole fields disappear with their crops, and the villages themselves gradually descend to the river. The palm-trees defend them at first, and keep the earth back by their bearded roots; then they capsize and fall on the slope. They may be seen hanging their heads in the water for some time, the clod of earth in the air, until the eddies detach them and they drift away. The fellahs, who have done nothing to save the trees, are as little careful to protect their houses. They may attempt to shore them up with a few stones after the earth has already fallen away under them. Then as the work of destruction progresses they flee from

room to room as long as any space remains which can shelter them and their families. When at last they are forced to leave, their recent experience does not teach them wisdom, and they choose a new encampment almost as exposed as the former one. The land is granted them by the community, and building materials cost little or nothing. Interwoven twigs or dried bricks covered with mud for the walls, veins of the palm-leaf or stems of dourah coated with mud for the roof, one or two low rooms, an airless courtyard inhabited by poultry and cattle, a fireplace of flat stones, straw mats, one of two wooden chests, water-jars, some coarse pottery, are all they need. A family of fellahs can move house once or twice a year at a cost of little more than ten days' work, and in thus dispossessing them every season the Nile causes them little material damage. Increase of wealth, however, is beginning to awaken them from their hereditary apathy, and as soon as they have earned enough money to obtain a suitable house, like those they would have in the towns, they try to combat the fantasies of the river, and occasionally succeed in repressing them for a brief space, but without entirely disarming them. So far as we observed, the river ended by baffling their attempts, and in spite of the embanking the spot chosen succumbs sooner or later.

Abnoub is a large town of the Arabian plain in the bend of one of the "seven turns" made by the Nile between Gebel-Abou-Fedâ and Siout. It formerly consisted of a number of cabins grouped round two or three white ill-kept houses, and like many villages of the Saîd concealed its wealth under a dilapidated and poor exterior. Five or six years ago a few Copts and Europeans built less rudimentary habitations. The natives, instigated by their example, demolished their cabins, and replaced them by dwellings more in keeping with their fortunes. The Abnoub of to-day may be recognised in the distance, towards the north, by a dozen villas built along the bank, the aspect and colour of which recall the Pharaonic villas represented in the paintings of the Theban tombs; we might say that one of them had been copied straight on to a celebrated fresco in the tomb of Anna, with its cubical shape, flat roof, façade pierced by a single narrow door on the ground floor and two small windows on the first floor, its long wall, broken by three doors painted red, the top bristling with a row of branches, and its garden of palms, doums, and acacias. Beyond is a sort of irregular square shaded by nabecas and sycamores, then the bulk of the buildings, some just begun, others nearly finished, and dominating all three Turkish pavilions, the first dark red, the

second grey, the third in two tones of blue, the walls framed in red moucharabiehs, and a glass roof to light the drawing-room. At their foot, cone-shaped heaps of débris are spread over the bank at the spot where the Nile encroaches. The water has not only undermined the ordinary buildings in clay or dried bricks: it has attacked edifices of burnt bricks and ashlar, the deep foundations of which seemed to defy its power, and has dismantled the greater part of them. Some portions of the wall have subsided whole, and only partly emerge from the water, or partly hang over it. A fragment of a solitary alley may be recognised in passing through the bay of a door, which is all that remains of the building to which it belonged. A disembowelled hotel shows its inner court bordered by two semi-circular rows of arcades. Chickens peck about the ruins, long, lean pigs explore them with their snouts in quest of problematical food; the children make a playground of them, and the neighbouring inhabitants meet there to look at the passing boat, or to discuss the quality of the foreigners aboard it.

And everywhere, on the right as on the left, from Siout to Keneh, there is scarcely a town or a riverside hamlet that has not suffered more or less from the rapacity of the stream. It has swallowed up the portico of the temple of

Antæus, at Gaou-el-Kebir, half of the Mosque of Tiles at Girgeh, farms, *sakiehs*, fire-engines, factories and their surroundings. It has undermined the steep Tell of Heou, under which the ruins of Diospolis Parva have slept for centuries, and if precautions had not been taken would have utterly destroyed them. About 1884 it was at least a hundred yards off, and we might have sworn that it would never touch them, but the fellahs helped to prepare the catastrophe. They exploited the heaps of nitreous dust, the sebakh with which they manure their fields, and thus lowered the level of the land in every sense. The water rushes in through the breaches and the trenches they cut, and so, wearing away the mass, carries off large slices from year to year. A mosque erected under one of the last Mamelouk Sultans stands almost intact, near scattered blocks of stone which mark the site of a Ptolemaic temple. One fine day the portion bathed by the river subsided; the minaret stands firm and straight, having lost nothing except its white coating, but the north wall has collapsed, the courtyard gapes open, and the condition of the arches which adorn the back and sides proclaims a speedy catastrophe. Nevertheless the fellahs continue their evil practices, and even while lamenting the misfortune that has attacked their

most venerated sanctuary, hasten, by their imprudence, the moment of its complete destruction. They supply the whole province with sebakh from it; when passing Heou you invariably see a dozen barges loaded or in process of loading.

Is there less life on the Nile than formerly?[1] In Middle Egypt, between Cairo and Siout, the sugar refineries keep up a considerable stream of navigation. At intervals we meet the long strings of boats which lend the Nile so picturesque an aspect, boats with two or three masts sailing proudly on their way with their lateen sails; smaller boats that swaggeringly carry their one sail horizontally across the mast; barges with grain or forage, barges with cut straw which look from the distance like floating millstones, barges with reddish jars or porous vases, the *zîr* and the *goulleh* which will filter and keep fresh the water of the inhabitants of Cairo. Tugs go up and down in the vicinity of the factories with their interminable chain of laden or empty barges, and at least in the sugar-cane season there is a perpetual noise of steam whistles and paddle-wheels.

South of Siout the noise subsides. The post boats break the silence for about an hour at fixed times, and in winter so do Cook's steamers or those of

[1] This was written in 1899.

rival companies. But once they have gone round the next bend solitude reigns again for whole days, scarcely disturbed by the passage of a few isolated boats or by the evolutions of local haulers and fishermen. Much merchandise that was formerly transported by water is now sent to Cairo by train, and the greater number of tourists prefer to take the railway to Louxor and the Cataracts. They do not abound; the plague at Alexandria and the war have frightened off a good many, and those who decided to go, did so with a certain amount of anxiety on account of the rapid fall of the river. But to tell the truth, when they first saw the breadth and strength of its current, they could not help thinking that people were making fun of them in telling them that the rise of the Nile was slight this year. The water spreads before their eyes from 800 to 1,200 yards in width, more like a lake than a river. How is it possible to imagine that it is not sufficient to allow of navigation?

The experience of a day or two soon shows them the truth of things. Long ridges of sand stretch everywhere across the immense bed, some still hidden, but betraying their existence by a slight trembling on the surface of the water; others emerge only to the extent of a few inches, others are already several feet in height, and form

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an archipelago of little islands, curiously indented, where all the water-fowl of the Nile seem to have congregated. Cormorants, plovers, blue and ash-coloured herons, cranes, pelicans, storks, ducks of variegated plumage, are at work fishing, or arrange themselves in long rows on the sandy shore meditating, and digesting their food. If some tiresome creature disturbs them, they fly off at one sweep by the order of their leader, to take up their position somewhere else and continue their meditations. The stream winds capriciously between the visible and invisible sandbanks, in places so narrow and following such sudden turns that a medium-sized boat can only manœuvre with precaution, and so shallow that to get through it the vessel should not draw more than about 3 feet of water. The pilot is in front, his eye ready to seize the least sign—a change of colour, a rippling, a wrinkle imperceptible to all but him—and, his long staff, the *medreh*, in his hand, he goes on taking soundings every moment. He transmits his orders to the steersman by word and gesture, and it is only the complete accord of the two men that prevents accidents in the most dangerous places. The first time of running aground seldom annoys the tourist; indeed, he nearly always finds the novelty of the situation and the confusion attendant on the extrication amusing. At the

first shock the crew seize the *medrehs* and plant the iron points firmly in the gravel, and with the other end against their shoulders, put forth all their strength. As no one in Egypt works in silence, and the boatmen less than others, invocations burst forth to God, to the Prophet, to local and general saints, "Allah! Houa! Ia Mohammad! Ia Ahmad! Ia Embahi! Ia Abbasi!" and, interspersed with the everlasting "*Hele, hele*," keep time to their movements. If the effort comes to nothing, the felucca stands off, the anchor is dropped, they pull upon it, and in so pulling drag big steamers over the gravel or mud for a hundred yards or more. When the operation only lasts an hour or two interest does not flag, and the tourist sets out again, delighted to have taken part in one of the accidents of life on the Nile. But sometimes, if recourse is not had to the strongest measures, a boat may be aground for six hours, or ten or twelve or twenty-four hours, or even for whole months, until the inundation of the river. The captain lands and goes to the nearest village to ask the notables, the omdeh or the cheîkh-el-beled, to supply him with reinforcements. It is a compulsory service which is occasionally paid for, but more often taken gratuitously. All the fellahs available throw themselves into the river,

pulling at the rope, stiffening their arms, bending double, and raise the boat, move it, lead it into deep water. You soon grow tired of running aground, and when the accident occurs the Arab vocabulary does not contain enough bad language in which to curse the pilot's and helmsman's lack of skill, and then, as there are no more oaths available, you grow tired of your own wrath and determine philosophically to get what profit you can from the accident. It is not so bad after all if it happens at a fine spot, and I have only to be thankful for the accident that grounded me several times at the foot of Gebel-Abou-Fedâ. If, on the other hand, the only consolation is the view of a sandy shore and a horizon bounded by dikes enlivened with telegraph poles, it is a good moment for dealing with arrears of correspondence and urgent business, the settlement of which had been deferred through the attractiveness of the river banks.

But what is merely an annoyance for the traveller threatens to become a calamity for the native. The Nile is as low this year[1] at the end of December as in ordinary years at the end of April, and the fall, far from lessening as we might hope, goes regularly on, or even at moments increases; a few weeks more and the river will

[1] This was written in 1899.

be fordable in more than one place. The news from the interior is very bad. There has been less snow and rain in Abyssinia and the region of the Equator, and the reservoirs that feed the river were not sufficiently filled last year. The Blue Nile is at the end of its resources, the White Nile is falling more and more, and the vast basin of the Victoria Nyanza is 3 feet below its customary level. Two-thirds of the Saîd have not been irrigated, and will produce nothing before the return of the inundation. Near Akhmîm the French engine has procured the watering of the fields situated round the town, but in spite of the incessant action of the *chadouf* the rest of the district is fallow. What ought to be immense tracts of young corn or beans in flower are only dry mounds. Between Bellianeh and Abydos the plain, which usually resembles that of Normandy in its fertility and its rich crops, is now languishing and promises only a meagre harvest in those places where it is not wholly barren. Beyond Bellianeh the banks to right and left are covered with vegetation, but as soon as they are left behind it ceases, and as far as the beginning of the desert only the bare ground, dusty in the sun, is to be seen. Persons in high places grow anxious, and actively seek means of obviating the consequences of the drought. Engineers are busy storing up water,

financiers are trying to reduce taxation for the worst sufferers, without compromising the Budget, and the exemption from taxation of land that has had to remain uncultivated is under discussion. The fellahs alone, although most concerned, do not seem to trouble much about the future. When questioned, they agree that the year is bad, that poverty threatens, that perhaps they will not know where to get bread till the harvest of next year, but the possibility of a reduction of the taxes overwhelms them with joy, and outweighs the certainty of future trouble. Those who, by selling antiquities or hiring out donkeys, are comfortably off, take no care to save their profits for a bad season, but spend them day by day according to their fancy and leave the care of getting them out of the mess when the crisis comes to the Government. If the Government fails, then God will provide.

VII

KENEH AND ITS MUNICIPALITY

It would seem as if all the animals of an Egyptian farm had assembled on the shore by the side of the dahabieh. A whining camel is exchanging surly reflections with a disconsolate donkey, two buffaloes bellow in two different keys, dogs brawl, barking loudly, turkeys cluck, a half-dozen cocks challenge one another loudly and shrilly, and now and again an Arab flute, snuffling and shrill, accompanies the cadence of a lamentable melopœia. The noise increases, and at length becomes so bad that I can stand it no longer, and go up on deck to send the menagerie to finish its serenade elsewhere. But neither camel, nor ass, nor dog is to be seen, only on the shore a sort of turbaned juggler, who, puffing out his cheeks and waddling along, is making the uproar all by himself, imitating the cries of animals in the hope of bakhshîsch. He is respected for twenty leagues round, and pointed out to tourists as one of the wonders of Keneh.

Twenty years ago Keneh was famous for its manufacture of porous *goullehs* for keeping the water fresh, and for its colony of somewhat elderly almehs, the last of a company of them exiled by Abbas Pacha in 1853. Keneh was then separated from the river by a barren plain bounded on the west by a canal that was dry in winter. Its appearance was most commonplace, with its public buildings in front, moudirieh, barracks, powder-magazine, the houses of the Coptic consuls with the arms of France and Germany, groups of clay hovels separated by muddy, stagnant alleys, an ill-provided bazaar, all the poverty and dirt of Upper Egypt. At the present time Keneh continues to manufacture *goullehs*, but the last almehs died a dozen years ago, full of days and rich enough to have deserved universal esteem. It possesses instead a new institution, of which it seems to be very proud, a municipal commission, almost a municipality, recruited among the most notable inhabitants. The town is connected with the Nile by an avenue of fine lebakhs. The municipality planted them and tends them. In the middle of the roadway a large iron roller drawn by an ox crushes the pebbles and so renders the road smooth. The municipality have brought it from Cairo. On one side squads of workmen dig a trench and lay pipes in it. The municipality have decided to bring water from

the Nile and are making the conduits. The road winds through a well-cultivated country where patches of green corn alternate with squares of beans or lupins and with strips of many-coloured poppies. Keneh makes large quantities of Theban extract, and for several centuries has been the principal opium market in Egypt. A dam furnished with sluice-gates bars and regulates the canal, always by virtue of the municipality, and the bank is no longer bordered with large buildings. It has been invaded by a mass of new houses, which hides them and shuts out for them the view of the plain. At the end of the dike the municipality have laid out a public garden, two or three gravelled walks and beds of flowers, not over full, but which brighten the entrance. We turn to the right and at once recognise the beneficent action of the municipality. The ground is no longer, as before, a bed of dust, soft, uneven, ill-smelling, soiled with all kinds of unnameable rubbish and dirt. It is firm under the feet, clean and freshly watered, but not too wet, so that the donkeys may not slip. A busy crowd circulates, carts loaded with cases, or barrows pass and meet in good order, itinerant tradesmen cry their goods under the vigilant eye of the police, and now and again a numbered cab drives discreetly along. Keneh is decidedly a civilised town and a large town.

The bazaar looks well under its worm-eaten wooden roof; although not as good as that of Siout, its variety is pleasing to the eye. The shops are well provided and attract many customers, but you must not expect Oriental colour. With the exception of the babouches, everything comes from Europe and Cairo, where stuffs, pottery, glassware, furniture, preserved comestibles, are all made after European models. One of the principal okelles used to be reserved for merchants from Hedjaz, who brought barbaric camel-hair carpets, but of a quite good design; the largest were worth from two to three guineas, and with some chicanery were sold in Paris as antique carpets. The okelle is there, but it is changed into a café, and merchants do not stop at Keneh any more; they take their carpets to Suez, to Port Saîd, or to Cairo, whence the brokers send them to Europe. The vegetable and poultry market is properly an extension of the bazaar, and there astonishing progress is to be seen. Twenty years ago only indigenous vegetables were sold, pumpkins, cucumbers, bamiahs, meloukhiahs, lupins, beans; now there are nearly all the European vegetables, carrots, turnips, cauliflowers, cabbages, beetroots, peas, beans, red and yellow potatoes, without mentioning salads such as lettuce and chicory. To tell the truth, they are not as good

as ours, and for this reason. The good people of the Saîd especially value size and solidity in what they eat; they like, as French peasants say, something that fills the stomach. Our new potatoes and young peas and beans, our small carrots and turnips would seem very poor food to them, since it does not after eating sufficiently stifle the empty feeling; they like woody turnips and carrots, hard peas as big as balls, overgrown cabbages and cauliflowers run to seed; they prefer the exaggeration of our vegetables to our vegetables themselves, but the exaggeration as seen on a vegetable stall or in baskets as the visitor rides through the town on his donkey is very pleasing to the eye. Doubtless, local colour loses through this invasion of a new order, but even in Egypt we cannot feed on local colour for long, and those tourists who are most hostile to the changes that spoil the physiognomy of the country would grumble at the hotelkeepers of Louxor if they gave them the former native vegetables instead of French early ones.

Behind the poultry market the high street winds towards the railway station with all the sights and sounds of a populous suburban street in a French provincial town. Sometimes the shops cease and yield place to the bare façade of a middle-class house or a cheîkh's tomb. The windows of the

tomb are barred, but have neither glass panes nor shutters, and through the opening the interior is visible. The coffin rests on trestles or on a low platform and is concealed by an ample mortuary cloth, the pieces of which are arranged according to a curious pattern. From a distance they remind us of the geometrical patterns that decorate the doors of mosques, and the colours are combined in a harsh and careless manner, light chestnut with dazzling yellows and greens; the seams are hidden under a braid of tarnished tinsel, which helps somewhat to tone down the discords. The turban is laid on the cloth at the level of the head, rags and various objects are hung above the coffin, offerings of sick persons who have been cured, or of the faithful saved by the intervention of the saint. A man crouching at the head recites a chapter of the Koran in a low voice, distracted neither by the noises of the street nor the gaze of the curious.

Near the railway station, on the right of the roadway against the wall, a sarcophagus of the Græco-Roman epoch may be seen, very much damaged and three parts buried in the ground. Tradition has it that this was the place of embarkation used by Sidi Abderrahîm el Kenaouî, one of the greatest saints of the district, when he crossed the Nile in going from his farms at

Denderah to his house at Keneh. He is buried not far from there on the other side of the railway line, at the entrance of the cemetery itself, and three tall lebakhs distinguish his tomb, the oldest certainly of all the trees of the kind I have seen in Egypt, as the size of the trunks and the thickness of the branches testify. The last of them is hollow, and its twisted roots form a sort of niche or rather corridor at the level of the ground which divides it into parts. A beggar-woman has installed her kitchen there, and while we passed was occupied in blowing up her fire with great energy. The flame rose high up and licked the bark. It is evident that some day it will catch the dry trunk, and there will be a fine blaze which will probably extend to the neighbouring trees. A few steps from there a fourth lebakh, still young, shades a fountain in beaten clay that the mortmain of the saint fills each day with the water of the Nile for the use of passers-by. It was in its shade that Sidi Abderrahîm crouched when he came to the cemetery to pray. A wooden dahabieh is suspended from the principal branches instead of the stone sarcophagus, which would have been too heavy, and near it the usual rags testify to an incredible number of prayers granted or cures accomplished. The tomb itself is quite close, a new or a restored chapel, adorned outside with very primitive

drawings, into which a most amiable cheîkh invites us to enter. It has nothing striking to show; as in any ordinary mosque, you pass through the whitewashed halls of ablution and prayer and then a small courtyard before reaching the vaulted chapel in which the coffin rests, covered with a variegated cloth, renewed every year. A ragged beggar sleeps in a corner; on the threshold an effendi in a light-coloured jacket and a high tarbouche murmurs a prayer with great fervour.

VIII

DENDERAH

THE ordinary way of reaching Denderah is so devious that, if pressed for time, it is better to avoid it. So we go down among the sugar-canes to find a short cut, and proceed in Indian file along the irrigation trenches as best we can. The donkey-boys have their work cut out for them in preventing their beasts from slipping in the mud or stumbling over the fallen canes. The harvest began a fortnight ago, to the benefit of the sugar refineries of Nag-Hammadi. Vast spaces are already cleared. In spite of the approaching darkness two or three gangs of labourers were still at work cutting down the canes and tying them on to the growling camels. But the day's task is over almost everywhere, and the reapers are wending homewards chattering as they go. As we meet them, they suspend their conversation and assail us with the usual request for bakhshîsch, but in so good-humoured a tone that it is almost a friendly greeting.

We have already left them far behind when we still hear the women's laugh and the shrill tones of the children. The ground soon rises, and the sebakh diggers have dug into it so terribly, that it is necessary to be very careful not to fall into some hole. Rows of ruined walls show the positions of the ancient streets and mark on the ground the grouping of the buildings: here the ruins of a vaulted house, there a half-overturned basilica, its pillars of grey stone, its architraves broken, its mortar in black basalt, the whole submerged in incredible masses of broken glass and reddish potsherds. On the top of the eminence is a thick, heavy gate, the sides cut about and covered with mediocre hieroglyphics in praise of the Emperor Domitian and of the Antonines. We enter, and suddenly at the end of a kind of dusty avenue see a dozen yards above us in the air an army of large, calm, smiling faces sheltered by a stiff, hard cornice. It is as if the temple was starting from the ground to go to meet the visitor.

Mariette and his successors tried to disengage it completely, but they only succeeded in emptying the interior, and the exterior remained buried half-way up. The descent was made by a modern staircase, instead of entering on the flat through the ancient gateway. The banisters and the steps

were worn away; it seemed as if we were going down into a cellar. But for some years now the rubbish which disgraced the façade has been cleared away, and entrance is gained just under the portico. Six rows of enormous columns, rising about fifteen yards above the ground, support a roof of gigantic flat stones. Slender figures, stiff and formal, turn in rows round the shaft with sacerdotal gestures. Four women's faces with cow's ears, with a sort of rectangular case like the music-box of certain timbrels for headdress, formed a capital of elegant strangeness. The timbrel was Hathor's favourite instrument, the emblem into which she preferred to put a little of herself, so that the architect conceived the columns as so many huge timbrels out of reverence for her. The light flows between the columns, and striking the surfaces unequally, brings out some of the pictures that adorn them, while others are scarcely seen in the half-light. From the ground-line to the rise of the roof there is not an inch of stone on the panels that connect the columns, on the walls at the back, on the door-posts or the lintels, on the cornices, on the architraves, that does not contain a carved or painted figure or inscription. They represent the ordinary ceremonials of the religious services, and principally those observed at the building or dedication of

temples. The king strides over the site he has chosen in order to settle the boundaries; he marks the line of the walls with a cord, he hoes out the foundations, he spreads the sand on which the first course of stones or bricks is to be laid, he fashions the brick for the outer enclosure. The execution sometimes shows Greek influence, but the subjects are those usual in the earlier periods. Thoutmôsis III. or Ramses II., if they returned to earth, would recognise at the first glance the ritual they celebrated in their lifetime. It would be as well, however, that after having examined the whole they should not desire to discover the names of the kings who founded the temple, for the reading of the cartouches would afford them unwelcome surprises. The sovereigns who attitudinise so proudly before the native gods, with their short petticoats and varied headdresses, their lions' or jackals' tails, their censers, are not Egyptians, but Emperors of Rome—Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero—whom the sculptor has dressed as Egyptians. The priest of Hathor, on whom the misfortunes of the times had inflicted these Romans for masters, could not resign himself to believe that they were entirely alien to his race; he felt that they were exiled compatriots whom the gods had caused to be born in barbarous lands far from the banks of the Nile.

DENDERAH. RELIEF ON THE OUTSIDE WALL.

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Tiberius, Caligula, Nero were themselves deceived by appearances and proclaimed themselves Romans, and they were Romans for those of their subjects who were condemned to live outside Egypt. In Egypt only was it guessed that they were of the flesh of Râ, the authentic descendants of the national dynasties. They were dressed in the ancient fashion of the country, the language and the ideas of a bygone day were put into their mouths, and when duly disguised as Pharaohs little was wanting for them to imagine that, so equipped, they reigned over the immensity of the universe.

The portico was always accessible to all. The townspeople offered their sacrifices and their prayers there; their devotions ended, they withdrew, and the greater number of them never penetrated beyond: they only frequented the forecourt of the sacred house. Free access to the interior was the privilege of those alone whom wealth, rank, birth, and education lifted above the common herd. According to the Egyptian religion, a man could not pass directly from the clouded brightness of this world to the pure splendour of the gods; before actually confronting such radiance men's eyes must be weaned from terrestrial light. The halls immediately beyond the portico, then, were plunged in perpetual twi-

light, and the darkness increased as the dwelling of the divinity was approached, and in the Holy of Holies it was almost entirely dark. The twilight which begins within the portico prevails in the central nave as far as the threshold of the sanctuary. But the aisles are enveloped in darkness, the decorations of the walls look vague and blurred as they did in the old days when the religion of Hathor flourished in its vigour. The Chapel of the New Year alone welcomes us bright and luminous, a miniature temple placed in the very centre of the large temple. We find a narrow courtyard enclosed by high walls, between which a scrap of sky shines, a flight of jagged steps, a pierced façade, the gate of which is framed by two columns with Hathor's head, a single chamber where about the dog-days the rising of Sirius and the beginning of the year was celebrated, the whole making a very strange effect, and worth examining at leisure if we had the time. But our guide informs us that it grows late, and that we must hasten if we would terminate our visit before night closes in. What he does not dare to confess, and what I have known for a long time, is that the chapel is haunted and that he is afraid. Hathor lives there, and continues to watch over the treasure that the Pharaohs entrusted to her. She only comes out at rare

intervals, at full moon, to feed among the corn in the shape of a white cow. A certain man of Denderah, who met her some twenty-five years ago, cleverly conjectured that while she was foraging about, the hiding-place would be open and the treasure accessible. He hastened to the chapel, saw an open vent-hole in a corner, crept through it, and filled a sack he had with him with gold. He escaped from the beast, who returned furious, and as soon as he reached his home put his plunder into an old iron saucepan in which he kept his savings. He might have known that bewitched coin does not stay long in hands which have unrighteously seized it. The first time he went to take some of it, the saucepan disappeared through the earth, thus carrying off his savings as well as the property of the goddess. There would have been nothing to alarm us in a *tête-à-tête* with Hathor, but our guide was so terrified that, out of pity for him, we did not insist, and ascended to the roof of the temple.

It is arranged in three stories which retire one behind the other from the end of the sanctuary to the top of the pronaos. The first and the lowest is a kind of cloister, the sides surrounded by the high parapet which crowns the outer walls. Nothing that went on in it could be seen

from outside. The priest and the ladies of the town assembled there every year to celebrate the passion and resurrection of Osiris. They established themselves in the two chapels that terminated it on the north, and represented the tomb of the god. There they made an image of wood and stone and precious metals, with which they imitated the rites of mummification and the laying of the mummy in the coffin. For two days they watched and wept over this pretended corpse, while the priests and women charged with representing the principal personages of the legend—Isis and Nephthys, Anubis and Horus—performed the operations which were to bring him to life. At length the magic of the words and gestures worked: Osiris moved on his funeral couch, lifted his head, and sat up. The songs of lamentation changed into songs of joy, which, heard by the crowd gathered outside, announced the consummation of the sacred mystery. A loud shout of joy sounded across the plain, carrying the good news afar. To-day the mason wasps have taken possession of the chapels in which the Osirian drama was played, and their clay nests cover the inscriptions. Just at present the winter keeps them torpid, but in spring and summer raging swarms of them have to be confronted in climbing from terrace

to terrace up to the platform of the pronaos. The old staircase is destroyed, and the sort of iron ladder that replaces it is disquietingly fragile, but the view is one of the most extensive in Egypt. In the distance the grand yet simple lines of the hills extend in somewhat monotonous fashion. The Nile, its shining surface dotted with white sails, flows among the trees. The country stretches green and pleasant, with tufts of acacias and palms scattered about it. Here and there a village on a hill stands out grey amid the greenness. The evening mists begin to be visible above the houses. The wind brings in gusts the scent of flowering beans, and so penetrating a sweetness breathes from everything that we can do nothing but look vaguely at what is before us in a sort of voluptuous languor. The sun has just gone down; at the edge of the horizon a ripple of flame and liquid gold marks its course and lends colour to the growing twilight. The tones change and follow each other unceasingly, become lighter, melt into each other, graduate from flaming red to purple amethyst, golden yellow, soft pink, faded green, pale blue. For three-quarters of an hour there is a play of colour of inexhaustible strength and richness; then as darkness gains on the world the tints grow confused and melt away, the reflections vanish, the air thickens, the

sky becomes a uniform dark blue. We must break the charm and go down.

The temple is undoubtedly beautiful in the daytime when the sun shines on it and brings out all the details. But to see it as it used to be, and to recapture something of the emotions it roused in the souls of the faithful, it should be visited at night. The guards have lighted their lantern, but its feeble glimmer by contrast rather emphasises than dissipates the darkness in which we move. It seems as if the air has hardened and refuses to take the light. The building seems to have disappeared. Here and there a door-post, the shaft or the base of a column, a panel of a wall with its decoration of figures only half visible, rises and floats before our eyes for a moment, then suddenly fades away and is reabsorbed in the darkness. A flight of bats envelops us in a circle of short, rapid cries, the pattering of swift claws resounds at our approach, the echoes awake with a hollow noise which does not seem to coincide with our footsteps. A kind of vague presence seems to hover in the gloom, and to pursue us from chamber to chamber. Should we be really greatly astonished if at the turn of a corridor we met a priest come back to his post after centuries of absence, or if the sound of distant timbrels which announced the theophanies

of the goddess began to vibrate in the depths of the sanctuary? In the open air and under the starry vault of heaven the feeling of religious awe remains with us. Silently and almost fearfully we take the road to the river. When, at the end of the avenue, we turned round for a last look, the grand heads of Hathor seemed to become alive, and reply with kindliness to our farewell greeting. A moonbeam lit a spark of life in their eyes, and accentuated on their lips the melancholy smile that gives the Egyptian statues a mysterious attraction.

IX

THE ARRIVAL AT THEBES

As I rushed on to the platform with the unhappy expression of a man who has just missed his train, the station-master with a reassuring gesture showed me the inscription chalked on the traditional blackboard: I might have spared myself the loss of breath, for the Cairo express is fifty-three minutes late. I could have imagined myself in Europe, and the general aspect of the place aided the impression; and had it not been for the palm-trees in the distance and the employees' tarbouches, I might have been in a railway station in Provence or the Bordelais. Everything was there: the neat verandah, the little garden, the hens pecking on the lines, the puzzled dog who seemed to be asking in which direction he was presently to depart. A pile of luggage was waiting at the end of the platform, rows of carriages were at rest on the sidings, an engine with steam up was puffing impatiently in its corner, while the men were at work making up

the train. It is now only fourteen hours from Cairo to Louxor, and the nine Pharaohs who dwell there in the tomb of Amenôthes II. could get from the royal sepulchre to the comfortable glass cases prepared for them in the Museum in one day. After a night of shaking, cold and dust, you are assailed on your arrival by a crowd of importunate hotel touts and dragomans, each shouting the name of his hotel—Hôtel de Louxor, Hôtel de Karnak, Hôtel Tewfikieh; the omnibuses are at the door, and about ten cabs. The traveller manages as best he can, and a drive of five or six minutes through narrow streets deposits him all confused at the hotel of his choice; no sight of the monuments permits him to imagine that he is in the capital of Ramses, and not in some village of modern Egypt.

But it is in approaching Thebes by the Nile that the imperial beauty of the site on which it has been enthroned for centuries is best realised. Several hours before it is reached, while passing by El Khizâm and Gamoleh, a large headland of precipitous cliffs rises on the horizon, dominated on the right by a pyramidal summit; while lower down, towards the left, three pointed peaks rise bent back at the top, like trees bowed by the wind. These testify to the Theban plain, the boundaries between which it stretches, and

which arrest its expansion. At the fatal periods of history when the hordes of invaders from the banks of the Tigris or the tablelands of Ethiopia saw those landmarks, they knew that the end of their fatigues was at hand, and prepared for a final onset to gain the long coveted prey. The three peaks soon vanish, for the channel faithfully follows the windings of the right bank, and the high embankment cut out of the earth as if by a knife, wooded with acacias, tamarisks, nabecas, date-palms, almost shuts out the view on that side, but the landscape of the left bank can be clearly seen, and changes every moment. The cliff is smoother at the foot and joined by ridges between which are gorges, the last of which, standing out very dark against the yellow background, marks the entrance to the ravines that lead to the Valley of the Kings. At the turn of the first bend a second row of heights is revealed, which fall back ladder-wise to the extreme south, and are lost near Erment among the distant purple hills. But almost immediately a strange vision seems to rise out of the river itself; standing out clearly against a screen of trees we see the crenellated towers and the narrow gateway of a little Saracen fortress striped red and white, built by a Dutchman, M. Insinger, on a promontory beyond Louxor. From that moment

we are in Thebes. The city of the dead passes as in a panorama on the left bank, the undulating slopes of Drah-abou'l-reggah, the amphitheatre of Deîr el-Baharî, its long white colonnade, its inclined planes, its stories of superimposed porticoes, its irregular façade, then the hill of Cheîkh Abd-el-Gournah riddled with tombs, and then, clinging to the sides of the hill, a mass of grey walls in which the chapel of Deîr el-Medineh is enclosed, and then almost in the background, between spots of verdure, the indistinct silhouette of Medinet-Habou. On the right the domes and towers of Karnak are visible for a moment level with the ground before they are concealed by the trees. The yards of the boats melt into each other behind a spur of land, a mass of variegated buildings appears on an irregular mound of ancient débris at the bend, and while the steamer makes ready to land we behold minarets, the point of an obelisk, the bold cornice of a pylon, an avenue of gigantic columns, a whole temple with its courtyards framed by porticoes, its hypostyle halls, its chambers open to the air, its walls chased with hieroglyphics and darkened by time. The quay at which we land is the old quay of the Ptolemies, restored and repaired in places about ten years ago. A murmur of donkey-boys, dragomans, European loafers, and sellers of antiquities annoys the traveller as he

lands; the hotel porters fight for him under the watchful eyes of two policemen; two steps off is the Louxor hotel, its hospitable door decorated with pseudo-Egyptian ornaments by a native painter.

The temple looks very grand now that it is entirely dug out, and in the evening, after the noisy throng of tourists has departed, we can easily imagine it as it was in the time of its splendour. The oncoming darkness hides its breaches, veils the damage done by the Copts, clothes the poverty of the columns, and repairs the injuries of the bas-reliefs. The cry of the Muezzin, coming suddenly from the mosque of Abou'l-Haggag, resounds through the ruins like the call to prayer of some priest of Amon, king of the gods, forgotten at his post, and we almost expect to hear a choir of voices and a faint sound of harps answering him from the sanctuary with a melancholy hymn to the setting sun. Soon, in the imagination, the rows of figures on the walls descend to earth, and with banners raised aloft and smoking censers march in solemn procession, the sacred boat in which sleeps the image of the god on the shoulders of its bearers, through the airless corridors, the columned halls, the courtyards, through the triumphal doors, the avenue of sphinxes or colossal rams, the remainder of which go towards Karnak amid the silent plains.

But there is always risk of encountering some odd procession like that I met yesterday almost at the level of the square of the obelisk, a collection of very shabby Louis XIII. musketeers, bravely blowing their trumpets and beating the big drum with great force, two children in fair wigs and pink tunics riding astride a long-haired pony, then side by side a most correct amazon and a Hercules of the fair in white vest and red-spangled tights, then a string of Empire postilions mounted on white asses, and so grave that at first sight you would have thought them a company of learned men, but it was actually an itinerant circus parading before a gala performance. From time to time the orchestra was silent, the Hercules made his mountebank's speech in Arabic adjuring the inhabitants not to be sparing of their piastres, then the music redoubled its strength, and the cavalcade went prancing on its way.

Heaven knows what their takings would be, and if they would have enough to provide the poor devils with a dinner. The Louxor of twenty years ago was satisfied with the traditional almehs, but the dances and the mournful chants of the singing-girls of yester-year no longer suffice the Louxor of to-day. Year in, year out, at least two thousand tourists visit it, and they have transformed it. Americans and English form the

largest number, Germans and French are not rare, and the other countries of Europe, from gay Portugal to Holy Russia, furnish their contingent. On certain days of the week Cook's boats and those of other companies deposit their troops of travellers, who invade everything, set everything to work, so to speak, purchase or bargain for all the antiquities, real or faked, that they find offered for sale, then depart as hurriedly as they came—the tourist anxious to see everything properly pell-mell with the good people for whom the expedition to Egypt is a donkey-ride spoiled by the monuments.

Louxor is now a winter place colonised from December to the beginning of April by scholars, idle folk, and invalids. They chatter, intrigue, exchange cards, invite each other from hotel to hotel, or from boat to boat, as may be; they play tennis and bridge, plan picnics in the Valley of the Kings or the ruins of Karnak, organise athletic sports and mock races in which the native donkey-boys compete for the magnificent prize of three shillings; sometimes, even, a party is made up for the circus or the theatre. A chance company was playing in a tent every evening tragedies or comedies in Arabic, and its repertory included a Joseph sold by his brethren, a Telemachus imitated from that of Fénelon, a miser who dimly recalled Molière's Harpagon, and dramas

adapted from Racine or Shakespeare. The impresario was on the point of departure when I arrived, but I was told that "Romeo and Juliet," as interpreted by him and his companions, was no ordinary spectacle. From the moment in which old Montague, in classical costume, rushes into the fray exclaiming, "*Oskout ir Gaboullette*" ("Thou villain, Capulet!"), until that when Romeo, finding Juliet stretched on a red divan by way of tomb, drinks the poison from a bottle labelled *Cognac vieux*, the European, familiar with Arabic, has no reason to be bored.

The native, however, sees no cause for complaint, and is not scandalised by the incongruities of the dialogue or the staging. He laughs at the comic scenes, is moved to tears by the tragic episodes, is terrified by the murders, and it is really astonishing how easily he follows the threads of an action so alien to his habits. It is no slight indication of the changes that have now for some years been taking place in his mind that plays can be performed throughout the land that certainly did not have their origin in Alexandria or Cairo, and that the company can live on their takings.

Under the invasion of the foreigner old Louxor has almost entirely disappeared. The central street, the only one that formerly showed some

sort of life, is now nearly always deserted; the little bazaar which gave it animation, and that had to be traversed to reach Karnak, has closed its shops, and the tradesmen have migrated to the new quarter of the town. In the north the large irregular square in which the market was held every Tuesday has vanished. A hotel bounds it on one side, the police station shuts in the farther side, and the Catholic convent projects the shadow of its Latin cross over the site of the wretched hovels where the almehs used to dance. A picturesque pond of stagnant water, the last relic of the sacred lake on which the priest of Amon on certain days set afloat the mystic boat of their god, lay formerly on the north side, and the women used to draw water from it morning and evening for household use. Buffaloes bathed in it at midday in summer-time, only the snout and the backbone showing above the surface. Now it is filled up, and a new town has arisen on its site between the old street of the bazaar and the railway station. Building goes on unceasingly, gardens are being planted, and the native population is contaminated by European elements now established there, Greek bakals, Maltese tavern-keepers, subordinate railway employees, Italian photographers. On the south the canal which formerly bordered the

gardens of the Hôtel Pagnon has lately been filled up, and the land thus recovered sold. An enterprising landlord has built an esplanade there with frontage on the Nile, with a row of shops all resembling each other. It forms the outskirts of Louxor, and its vulgarity and ugliness is increased by the contrast it offers to the pure lines and severe beauty of the neighbouring temple. In one of the houses dwells a photographer, in another a chemist and druggist, in a third wily, insinuating Indians offer tourists trashy stuffs and exotic knick-knacks at 200 per cent. above their value. Two stuffed gazelles flank the door of a seller of antiquities, drinking-booths with vulgar signs try to attract customers with the promise of incomparable whisky. However, at the foot of these wretched booths the old Nile spreads his broad, pearly waters, and the undulating movement of their flow makes them glitter in the sun. The sandbank of Ourouzieh lifts its yellow back still wet from the waters that have scarcely retired, and far behind it the western plain of Thebes recedes with its verdure to the lowest slopes of the Libyan mountains. The mountains are of a luminous delicate pink, while an almost imperceptible blue colours the edge of the horizon: high up towards the west a few milky clouds float slowly in the calm whiteness of the sky.

X

A PARLIAMENT OF KINGS AT THE TOMB OF AMENÔTHES II.

THE eleven sovereigns discovered by M. Loret at Biban-el-Molouk in the hypogeum of Amenôthes II. have been awaiting the verdict concerning their fate for eighteen months. They modestly fill the ante-chamber, packed, labelled, numbered, put in ill-polished white wooden cases, like so many packages ready to start for a distant destination. We can scarcely imagine the anxiety that the defunct Pharaohs caused their successor the day after the burial. As it was incumbent that the splendour of their funeral equipment should equal or at least approach that of their terrestrial life, they were allotted not only quantities of furniture, stuffs, painted and decorated plates and dishes, but masses of jewels and royal orders, necklaces, bracelets, rings, amulets, weapons of war and of the chase, mostly in gold or silver, inlaid with enamel and precious stones. And these valuables were not delivered to them

ENTRANCE TO ONE OF THE ROYAL TOMBS IN THE VALLEY OF THE KINGS.

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at night or furtively: the pieces of jewellery that were not applied to the corpse during the wrapping of the mummy cloths round it were displayed in full daylight to the sight of the crowd who assisted at the funeral ceremony, so that every one in the land knew their value and number. So much wealth would certainly attract the robbers who exploited the Theban burying places, and they would soon have carried them off, had not efficient measures been taken to guard against their enterprises. Each tomb had its guards, who were relieved night and day and never lost sight of the entrance. Sentry-posts were placed all along the valley and enclosed it with an impenetrable barrier for all who did not know the password, while police made continuous rounds in the outskirts and relentlessly challenged any one who ventured too near.

At irregular intervals distinguished persons, appointed by the High Priest of Amon or by the King, descended on the places unexpectedly. They visited the hall, opened the sarcophagus, examined the mummy, clothed it with a new shroud or wrapping, if they found the old ones in bad condition, and usually before leaving wrote an account of their proceedings on the wooden cover of the coffin or on the shroud

itself. Even if these precautions checked the violation of the tombs, they did not succeed in entirely preventing it, and the sacrilege that professional robbers did not dare to risk was often accomplished by the guards themselves. They were underpaid, ill-fed, and ill-lodged, and only performed their duty from fear of punishment, and so, as soon as they saw an opportunity of plundering the Pharaohs entrusted to their care, they profited by it either alone or in partnership with persons outside. It is not unusual to-day for a professional excavator, making an incursion into forbidden ground, to furnish himself with food, water, and means of artificial light for several days, then to shut himself up in a tomb and not to stir until he has finished despoiling it.

The predatory spirits of former days did not do differently. Once shut up with the dead, they stayed as long as was necessary to rob him of all he possessed. They unwrapped the mummy at leisure, tore off its necklaces, bracelets, rings, jewels, and at need bared the breast in the hope of finding some valuable amulet. Sometimes they left it half-naked and bruised on the ground; sometimes, to save the guards, their accomplices, from punishment, they put everything tidy again, and left it, outwardly at least, as if it had not

been touched. Indeed, so skilful were they in that sort of fraud, that unless a very detailed inspection was made, no one would believe that under the eminently correct wrappings there was merely a parcel of broken bones, supplemented with palm branches or pieces of wood. The Pharaohs thus profaned reposed in their tombs till about the tenth century B.C., and then the High Priests of Amon of the XXIInd Dynasty, despairing of longer preserving them from destruction, resolved to get rid of them by hiding them in places so secret that no one would be able to hunt them out. They divided them into several groups, and buried them, one at the south of Deîr el-Baharî, another in the vault of Amenôthes II., others, again, in recesses of the mountain, where they will certainly be found some day. And so they ascend to the upper air after 2,800 years of tranquillity, and as soon as they appear cause their modern guards as much anxiety as they did those of a former day.

One question is, of course, put forward at the moment of their resurrection. Are they to be taken to Cairo and united once again with the members of their family who since 1881 rest in the galleries of the Museum, or is it better to leave them where they are to show travellers

Pharaoh in the tomb where his sons laid him? The sight of the royal mummies of Gizeh rouses in the visitors a curious feeling, partly of attraction, partly of repulsion. The heroes of classic times, those of Greece and of Rome, have cast off for ever their mortal coil, but the actors in the old Egyptian drama, their elders by so many centuries, are shown to us with all the substance of the body they inhabited, flesh and bone, figure, hair, the shape of the head, the features of the face. That slender, short personage is Thoutmôsis III., the conqueror of Syria, and the most formidable of the Theban Pharaohs, almost a dwarf in stature. The slim hands that Ramses II. peacefully crosses on his breast, strung the bow and manipulated the lance for a whole spring day under the walls of Qodshou, until his determined effort brought back victory to the Egyptian banners. Setouî I. possesses the serene countenance of a priest, a fact that did not prevent him from fighting boldly when the call came. Ramses III., on the other hand, appears like a stout, heavy rustic. History, certainly, gains a singular reality when written in the very presence of those who made it, and yet the advantages for many are more than outweighed by the horror with which this funereal parade fills them. It is, they say, a want of

respect, not to a royalty so long departed, but to humanity itself, to exhibit these emaciated bodies, wrinkled and blackened skins, grimacing faces, torn shrouds, and mummy cloths reduced to parcels of rags by the indiscretion of the archæologist. They deplore the stroke of fortune that has opened to us this charnel-house of kings, and beg that they may be spared the evil curiosity of the loafer. It would be a pious action of the man in command to send these Pharaohs back to the darkness that has so long protected them, and since the mystery of their Theban hiding-place is divulged, to assure them a retreat in one of the most solid of the Memphian pyramids. At first the idea seems somewhat attractive, but when we recall to mind that the pyramids when they were intact were not able to preserve their masters from desecration, we ask ourselves whether those same pyramids now they are in ruins would offer better protection to their precious inmates. An authentic king in the antiquity market has an incalculable value, and all the excavators in the land would soon enter on a campaign, each to try and unearth his piece of the dynasty. It would be necessary to recommence the old sentry rounds and inspections, only to arrive at a similar result after more or less delay. Ramses II. and

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Setouî I. would vanish one fine day, to reappear after a while in some eccentric collection at Sydney or San Francisco. Now that we hold the Pharaohs, they hold us in their turn, and we have no right to turn them away from our halls at the risk of losing them, but at the same time we ought not to exhibit them in a way that would wound any one. In the Museum being built for us is a hall reserved for Mariette's tomb; there as in a sort of chapel they ought to be placed, by the side and under the protection of the great scholar who did so much to revive their names and spread abroad their memory.

Most of the mummies imprisoned in the tomb of Amenôthes II. are only there by accident; they will go to Gizeh, near the kings of Deîr el-Baharî. But Amenôthes II. will not depart: he will remain in his hypogeum, provisionally, and as a trial, in company with four mutilated and naked corpses that are thought to be those of human victims sacrificed on the day of his burial. So that we have two series of distinct operations to carry out. First the hypogeum must be restored as far as possible to the condition in which it was at the time of its discovery. Then we must remove the Pharaohs designed for exile, and convey them across the plain of Thebes to the banks of the Nile, where they will embark.

XI

THE TOMB OF AMENÔTHES II.

The tomb of Amenôthes II. is dug out in the prolongation of an enormous fissure which cuts the face of the rock vertically in its whole height. A sandy slope of mingled stone chips and stone dust hides the opening. The plan is the same that prevailed at the beginning of the XVIIIth Dynasty, and with slight modifications served for Thoutmôsis III. and Thoutmôsis I., the father and great-grandfather of the sovereign: there is first a vertical trench, on the right side of which was a staircase with clumsy steps for the convenience of the workmen and excavators; then in the west wall at the back, a steeply sloping corridor, bored in the rock with great exertion, without inscriptions or decoration; next comes a second steep staircase, a deep shaft of about 24 feet, destined to bar the way to robbers, and, beyond, a low ante-chamber, its walls and ceiling scarcely shaped out, divided into two naves of equal dimensions by two dumpy pillars. When

M. Loret entered it wooden statuettes and the remains of offerings lay scattered over the ground, and on these had fallen four large boats, between two and three yards long, formerly despoiled by thieves; a mummy lay crosswise on one of them, naked and bruised. All the small objects have been for some time in the Museum, but eleven cases remain in distress in the right nave, which contains the bodies of the Pharaohs. The left nave is almost entirely filled by the staircase which leads to a last corridor, formerly strewn with a litter of débris, but empty now. The funeral hall, large and high, is supported in the middle by two rows of three pillars each. The ceiling is dark blue dotted with yellow stars in close rows. The journey of the sun in the region of the hours of the night is developed in all its wanderings on the walls in three superimposed rows; in the middle is the celestial Nile, on which the sacred boat floats without either oars or sails, struggling with the monsters of the darkness; above and below are the banks of the river and the mysterious retreats in which the gods of the dead and their Egyptian subjects vegetate. The figures are boldly but summarily drawn, the hieroglyphics are hurriedly engraved; it is like an enormous papyrus stuck on the wall for the

guidance of the sovereign, and in fact it is a copy on a large scale of the "Book of that which is in the Under World," that served as a guide to the souls during their peregrinations beyond the tomb. There they may see the faithful representation of the good or evil creatures they have to meet in the domain, they may become familiar with the characters and attributes as well as the names of the genii, they may read the formulas which, learnt by heart, will ensure a free passage to those who can repeat them without error, and can thus be certain of never being in danger, either on earth or in heaven, and of being able to enjoy the privileges granted to properly instructed souls wherever their destiny may take them. The ground is dug out at the western extremity, and a few steps set closely in between the two last pillars lead to an alcove lower than the rest of the hall. The sarcophagus fills the centre, a fine basin of sandstone, covered with a red plaster, imitating the granite of Syene; the cover was destroyed by robbers in ancient times, and pieces of it are scattered here and there. It still contained its wooden coffin with the mummy, and everywhere around in its near vicinity little figures of blackened wood, fragments of glass or stone vases, dried wreaths and factitious weapons were

heaped together in confusion. The four cells which flank the vault were equally crowded with furniture and despoiled corpses. In the two on the left were earthen jars for water, wine, beer, oil, perfumes, mummified joints of meat or mummified poultry, a quantity of fruit or cereals, in fact, everything that the Egyptian soul required for its nourishment. The first of the cells on the right offers a striking spectacle, three mummies lying side by side among the statuettes: a young man, a child of twelve to fourteen years old, a woman still adorned with long, silky hair, but all with the head or chest split open, like servants sacrificed in order to provide an escort for the sovereign to the other world. The second cell was walled up. It contained the nine kings that the high priests brought to the tomb when they gave up the attempt to preserve the neighbouring tombs from pillage. The mummies were taken out, but the wall was rebuilt stone by stone by the order of M. Loret, and the hieratic legends, written in black ink by one of the scribes who watched the operation about the tenth century B.C., can easily be seen.

It might almost be said that the old Egyptian architect foresaw our project, and wished to render its accomplishment easy. Three

iron gratings or three balustrades set between the pillars and the walls allow us to transform the alcove into a distinct hall, and so to isolate the sarcophagus and save it from the indiscreet. Visitors view the mummy from above at a distance of 6 feet, and if there is sufficient light, no detail of the scene need escape them. Afterwards we shall put the three supposed victims in their primitive positions, likewise guarding the door of their cell with a railing. Shall we light the scene by electricity or by some substance like acetylene instead of the candles or magnesium lamps, the smoke of which has been so destructive to the tombs that have long been opened? Experience will teach us the best method; for the moment we have to carry back those of the mummies who are to remain on the spot. Amenôthes II. and his three companions descend again to the vault, borne by four native workmen. With M. Loret's plan in his hand, Mr. Carter restored the mummies to their cell in the old order, first the man leaning against the wall, then the child, then the woman; the business took scarcely half an hour.

The restoration of Amenôthes exacted more thought and time. If the coffin was laid flat in the sarcophagus it would disappear entirely, and

the visitors, kept at a distance by the railing, would see nothing. It was necessary to raise it so that its cover might be level with the edge of the sarcophagus. To keep it in that position a support of suitable height must be placed under it. While waiting for the carpenters to make the requisite trestles, Mr. Carter piled up some of the blocks which barred the door before the irruption of the ancient thieves into the sarcophagus, and put the coffin on the improvised support. Three hours had been spent in re-instating the sovereign in his dwelling, three unforgettable hours for those who took part in the work. The air was thick, warm, motionless, heavy with fine dust, and impregnated with an imperceptible odour of musty aromatics; a gradually increasing sensation of oppression in breathing and heaviness of head was felt, there was an overwhelming silence, and at the same time that sort of almost religious awe which makes us dislike speaking, or, if speech is necessary, makes us talk in whispers. A few pieces of candle placed in a corner vaguely lighted the ante-chamber while the workmen were taking the Pharaoh out of his modern case. With their bare feet and legs, the upper part of the body naked, a soft linen cloth round their loins, the head boxed in their tawny takieh, like the figures whose

silhouettes adorn the walls of the Theban tombs, the Egyptians of to-day seem to be the Egyptians of long ago, resuscitated in order to recommence their funereal duties. The royal coffin, lifted without a sound, passed into their hands, and moved off in the darkness of the staircase; it slowly traversed the vault, descended the steps, slipped into the sarcophagus, fitted into it with a dry cracking sound, and for an instant I thought that time had suddenly gone backwards, and that at one swoop I had travelled back thirty-four centuries to be present at the burial of Amenôthes.

XII

THE DEPARTURE OF THE ROYAL MUMMIES

The removal of the mummies ought to be done all at once, in a single day. Some of the coffins, made of thick planks of close-grained wood, attain a considerable weight and are difficult to handle, requiring eight men at least. As the road to be traversed between the tomb and the river bank is over five miles in length, it will be wise to provide relays several times during the march. Then add to the ordinary workmen the chiefs of the squads, the guards, a few carpenters in case of accident, some water-carriers, and there will be about a hundred lusty fellows to send into the funereal valley. There might perhaps have been difficulty in finding them if the workshops of Karnak had not just then been filled with men accustomed to deal with blocks of sandstone heavier than the heaviest of our kings. M. Legrain kindly put them at our disposal, and on January 12th, at nine o'clock in the morning, the picked men of his troop came to Biban-el-Molouk furnished with the

THEBES. THE TOMBS OF THE KINGS.

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ropes, levers, rollers, hand-barrows, and all the apparatus required for the work. The barrows stand in single file along the pathway in readiness for their load, and form an almost uninterrupted line from the tomb of Ramses VI. to that of our Amenôthes II. The men, for whom an expedition of this kind, so different from their ordinary employment, is a sort of holiday excursion, remain in groups near the barrows. Some are eating or drinking, others are sleeping in the sun as a provision against the fatigue to come, others, again, hum a tune or tell each other tales, some reckon up the value of the Pharaohs, and cannot imagine guineas enough to arrive at it; bursts of quarrelling and of laughter, immediately suppressed by the overseers, sometimes escape from their ranks. A few hawks, astonished at the noise, hover above the crowd, uttering shrill cries. A company of tourists, whose evil star has brought them to the tombs that day, cannot believe either their eyes or their ears, and with a stupefied air contemplate the spectacle of such unusual activity.

Now, at the orders of Baskharoun, two selected gangs glide under ground. For twenty-five years Baskharoun has been one of the most useful servants of the Museum. He is a Copt of pure breed, and his rough features remind us of those

of certain of our Pharaonic statues. Take off his blue shirt, his turban, his full trousers, and his red babouches, and dress him in the striped waist-cloth, the close-fitting cap, the rush sandals, and you will obtain an Egyptian of the best period, one of those, if you like, who helped to seal up Amenôthes in his vault. Although there is no appearance of it, he is of immense strength, knocking down his man with a blow of the fist, and easily moving the most unlikely weights. Once at Boulaq, when one of the gigantic statues of Ramses II. while being moved from one room in the Museum to the other lost its balance on its rollers, he held it for a whole minute, long enough for the others to come to his assistance and set it right again. Here it is less brute force that is required of him than skill in working in a confined space, and in moving fragile objects, as these thousand-years-old coffins must be, without knocking them against the walls or damaging any of their contents. Mr. Carter points out to him the mummy that is to go first. With the tips of his fingers, almost without seeming to touch it, Baskharoun and his companions move it and lift it above the shaft, carry it along the staircases and rough-hewn corridors. It is the inverse of its former journey, from darkness to light, from the gloomy Amentît to the land of

the Sun. The others have followed by the same road in less than two hours. The ante-chamber is empty, and the nine kings, restored to the upper air, lie each on his bier, the lighter ones laid flat without any sort of fastening, the heavy ones tied to the trolley with ropes as a precaution against a fall. The men might take up their burdens at once and carry them to what is left of their Thebes after so many centuries if it was not necessary first to make their hiding-place neat. A corpse had been left behind that the large number of cases had prevented from being put back into its place the other day—the unfortunate creature that the thieves had left naked on one of the funerary boats of Amenôthes. It was carried back into the ante-chamber, boat and all, near the first pillar. Its disordered hair, bruised face, and the traces of violence visible on the chest gave it a horrible aspect. It would seem as if there had been a struggle before the man succumbed. Possibly he was a sentinel who, surprised by assassins at the entrance of his sovereign's apartments, had been mortally wounded, and had died on the spot where he had fallen. But times flies while we are effacing the traces of our work. It was one o'clock in the afternoon when, all our preparations finished, we determined to leave the tomb. At the first signal,

each gang of men shouldering their king, the column got into line with Baskharoun at the head, M. Legrain, M. Chauvin, M. Insinger, and the few Europeans who had been present bringing up the rear to the right and left on donkey-back and horseback. At the second signal it began to move, at first slowly and in silence, then faster as the men, in order to give a rhythm to their march, intoned the traditional invocation, "*Sallé an-nabi, sallé!*" ("Pray to the Prophet, pray!") The advance guard reach the gorge which passes out of the valley into the Ouadiên, and march into it to the sound of the singing. It seems as if one of the most striking pictures of the tombs has taken bodily form and descended from the walls into modern life. It is the picture that represents the funeral procession, and more particularly that part of the procession containing the furniture and equipment of the dead man. There were the variegated chests carried on barrows just like the cases of our royal mummies. They contained the linen, cloths, jewels, wigs, sacre doils, and the number was in proportion to the wealth of the personage whose funeral they followed.

A sort of vague track marks the whole length of the Ouadiên. It was made by the Egyptians of the Theban epoch in order to facilitate the approach of the funeral processions of the

Pharaohs to the tombs. Since the burials there have ceased it has been effaced; and although the Service des Antiquités cleared it of the most encumbering obstacles six or seven years ago in preparing for a probable visit of the Khedive, it is still covered with chips of stone and pebbles sharp enough to make it painful for those who walk over it barefoot. Our men, rendered awkward and heavy-footed by the burden they carried, stumbled every minute against a sharp piece of rock or groaned when a splinter of flint cut into the skin. The sun burnt their eyes, the wood of the litter rubbed their shoulders, and although relays succeeded each other every five minutes, fatigue and depression soon laid hold of them. At the end of the first three-quarters of a mile they mutinied, encouraging each other to drop the litters, and there would have been a general stampede had not the all-powerful Baskharoun by shouts and gestures, and also by the rod, reduced his men to obedience. He seemed to be everywhere at once, lending his shoulder to the weak when the road was rough, giving the malcontents a shake and forcing them to hum a march tune. Although a Christian, his knowledge of the Musulman saints is astounding. He is the first to invoke them, and as soon as one had no more weight with the workmen, he immediately invoked

another, perhaps a local saint like the Cheîkh Abou'l-Haggag of Louxor, or general saints of the Moghrebins, Arabs, Syrians, the beatified of Irak and of Persia. At each fresh name even the most fatigued of the men pulled themselves together, stiffened their backs, and walked steadily on, but after three or four minutes their energy failed. The voices died away one after the other and the grumbling was redoubled, and there were slight attempts at revolt. A little man, his figure hidden by the long, variegated cloak of a Soudanese dervish, was distinguished for his laziness and his seditious spirit. If one of us had not been continually at his side to watch him, he would soon have deserted his post and caused his companions to become disaffected. Perspiring, panting, groaning, shouting in some way or other, the procession got through the second three-quarters of a mile, then the third. At the last bend the trees came in sight, and knowing, therefore, that the plain was near at hand, the courage and spirits of the men revived. The refrains sounded with greater volume, backs were straightened, and a wag chaffed the grumblers: "Well, what have you got to complain of? Aren't you carrying your fathers, the Pharaohs? They have gold with them, much gold, and you'll have some of it, God willing." And as

he sees that I am listening to him: "Our bacha this evening will give us much bakhshîsch, one piastre bakhshîsch, two piastres bakhshîsch, won't you, Sir Pacha?" The troop, who perceived the allusion, repeated in chorus: "One piastre bakhshîsch, two piastres bakhshîsch, won't you, Sir Pacha?" And so they are all happy till the halt. A little beyond the Temple of Gournah, near the village, there are ten minutes' rest for all, and most rightly. They have only taken an hour and a quarter to do the two and a quarter miles of the ouady, loaded as they are. The worst part of the business is over. They have, it is true, to traverse the causeway that dams the irrigation canal, the Fadîlieh, then to cross the sandbanks which separate the western river bank from the place where the water flows this year—that is, three and three-quarter miles—but the ground is soft and supple and does not hurt the feet. Surveillance is no longer needed, so we ride on fast in advance to prepare the last part of the operation—the embarkation.

The dahabieh is already at the place appointed, standing well out in the stream; the shallowness of the water will necessitate the use of launches to put the cases on board. About four o'clock the increasing sound of rhythmic chanting announces the approach of

our men, and almost immediately the first of them can be seen above the undulation of the sand; observed from the distance, through clouds of dust that half conceal the details, our band resembles more and more the cortège of an Egyptian funeral. Thus shouting and running, it reached the banks of the Nile, in order to join the baris who carried death toward the west, to its eternal abode. There was the same mixture of joy and woe, the same sounds, the same invocations to saints or gods, the same lack of order, the same jostling. Every moment absurd accidents disturbed the gravity of the ceremony: a porter would let his load fall, a boat in turning would strike against another smaller boat and ill-treat it. I call to mind the episode in the tomb of Harmhabi, in which figures the captain of a launch upset, with the offerings he was taking on board, by a stroke of the rudder of the funeral cange, and suddenly one of our men slips and falls just as he is getting into the launch. The case, the corner of which he was holding, falls with him, upsets bearers and rowers, but fortunately stops before falling into the water, and for a moment, between laughter and oaths, it is the exact scene that the ancient artist had drawn three thousand years before. An hour to arrange the nine mummies on the deck, speeches of thanks,

and, what our heroes appreciate more, a splendid tip of a piastre, a whole piastre each, and then the dahabieh lifts anchor, moves away slowly, and tugged by its feluccas towards the temple of Louxor, reaches its accustomed anchorage with its royal freight.

XIII

KARNAK AND THE WORKS IN THE HYPOSTYLE HALL

Slabs of earth arranged in stories in order to get blocks of stone 60 feet up, derricks like those used under the XIXth Dynasty, blocks under transportation on acacia runners and pulling at the ropes, files of vigorous fellahs, the blue galabieh on their backs or the white drawers on their loins, the brown takieh on their heads: if Ramses II. returned to inspect the works going on just then at Karnak, he would imagine at first that nothing had changed in Egypt. Most of our workmen are wearing nearly the same costume as his, and the methods employed by us for moving the columns upset at the time of the catastrophe of October 3, 1899, are very nearly the same as those employed by him when building them. He must not, however, look too closely nor try to regulate the work. His orders issued in excellent Egyptian, at least I like to think so, would not be understood by our overseers, and

KARNAK. GENERAL VIEW OF THE RUINS NEAR THE SANCTUARY.

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M. Legrain, who in grey jacket and mushroom-shaped hat was directing the work, would in no way remind him of the late High Priest of Amonrâ, Baoukouni-khonsou, King of the Gods, who presided in his reign over the building at Thebes. The derricks are furnished with differential pulleys, of the play of which he would understand nothing. The ease with which the big architraves are moved on the Decauville trucks would appear to him to be magic, and I do not know how we could explain to him the mechanism of the hydraulic cranes. We had resolutely excluded costly apparatus and the perfected machinery, the action of which would have been too rough for the venerable stones with which we had to deal, from our workshops. But although in principle we adopted the ancient methods, we were not forbidden to combine with them those modern engines which enabled us to work quickly and cheaply.

After the first feeling of stupefaction had passed away and we could regard the disaster coolly, it was recognised that three series of operations would be necessary to remedy it. First of all, the five columns which threatened to fall must be taken down, then the débris of the eleven columns that had already fallen must be removed and put away very carefully so as

not to confuse the parts. That done, there would be a large empty space in the north aisle of the Hypostyle Hall, which would have to be tested yard by yard to ascertain the condition of the sub-structure, and to decide what was needed to strengthen it before beginning the restorations. A committee, composed of archæologists, architects, and engineers, would be sent to the spot and would conduct the inquiry at their leisure. When it had sent in its report, the Service des Antiquités would carry out the operations recommended, and proceed to put up again all that was possible of the fallen columns. The Caisse de la Dette, on the demand of the Egyptian Government, granted a liberal sum of money, and M. Legrain, sent to Karnak in December, 1899, energetically set to work. The aspect of the ruins was not encouraging; the disjointed tambours filled up the north nave, and five shafts emerged from the irregular heaps, but so bent and out of the perpendicular, that it seemed that they too must fall every moment. It was necessary to sink them in order to set up the derricks at the height of the capitals, and M. Legrain hastened to begin the work. By the end of December, 1899, the abacus of the most dangerous column, a square slab weighing ten tons, had been brought down and sent to the store. The

rest quickly followed, and all seemed to be going splendidly when an incident occurred which seemed to prognosticate a new disaster. The northern pier of the pylon, which bounds the Hall on the west, had long been a cause of uneasiness. It had seemed to be giving way in 1883 and 1884, and I had been obliged to shore up the most unsafe portions. The posts with which I had then supported it were destroyed in 1895, and in their stead the low parts of the wall were lined with rubble-work in stone and cement. Did the disturbance caused by the fall of the columns produce a movement in the masonry, or did the foundations, eaten away by saltpetre, suddenly give way? About the end of January, 1900, the whole of the south front split, sank down, bent outwards, and blocks began to pour down from the upper courses in such quantities that we deemed it prudent to keep tourists away. We approached the Caisse de la Dette again, once more it granted the sum of money demanded, the Office of Public Works lent us its chief architect, Manescalco-Bey, who sketched out the first draft of a method of shoring it up, then M. Legrain, letting the taking down of the columns go more slowly, proceeded to receive and to transport to the place of the work the materials dispatched to him from Cairo. At

the beginning of April, when everything was ready, M. Ehrlich, a German engineer, borrowed from the barrage work at Assouân, came and helped us with his experience. For a month and a half there were two independent gangs of men in the Hypostyle Hall, that of M. Legrain at the columns, that of M. Ehrlich at the pylon. When they were dismissed on May 23, 1900, the threatening columns had gone to rest in peace in the place reserved for them in the store, and the pylon, boarded up the whole of its height, no longer inspired fear.

So many disturbances of the ground and restorations did not tend to make Karnak beautiful. Those who visited it previously will remember the admirable view which spread before them when, arriving by the river, they approached the temple by the triumphal entry of the west. First came the avenue of Setouî II. with its rams crowded one against the other, the huge pylon of the Ptolemies, the court of the Ethiopians and its gigantic column, the half-fallen pylon of the Ramessides, and framed between its two towers the central aisle of the Hypostyle Hall, then the magnificent chaos of granite and sandstone blocks whence the two obelisks of Thoutmôsis and the Queen Hatshopsouîtou stood out: no other monument in the world gives as vivid an impression of strength and immensity.

To-day, the view is cut in the centre by M. Ehrlich's scaffolding, four stories of beams thrown across the central bay. A Decauville railway line winds under this disconcerting apparatus and penetrates into the Hall. If we follow it we come on the left against the shore of dry pebbles topped with sacks of sand which completes the efficacy of the woodwork, then we confront the mound of earth heaped up by M. Legrain. Tourists, knowing little about the accident, have assured me with conviction that the Hall was more beautiful formerly and that it would have been better not to touch it. We console them by telling them that all this mess is only transitory, and that if they will come back in four or five years we shall have finished the restorations to their satisfaction. They depart in bad humour, and I cannot help sympathising with their annoyance. It is always a pity to touch a monument, even when necessity compels, but could we have acted differently ? I have often told tourists that if they knew the precarious state of the walls underneath which they stood for hours in admiration, they would not dare to enter the temple.

The foundations have given way without showing any appearance of such a state of things, the blocks of stone are only kept in place by a miracle of equilibrium, the architraves, which are broken in

two or three places, are literally suspended at 30 to 60 feet above the earth. If a sparrow alights on them we fear they will not bear the weight, and will end by falling. Slight occurrences prove every moment how incapable the apparently most solid of the buildings and tombs are of resistance. A month ago one of the pillars of the ante-chamber in the tomb of Setouî I. suddenly broke. A fortnight after one of the sandstone beams which cover the right lateral sanctuary of the Temple of Khonsou literally melted away after thirty-six hours' rain, and a week later a portion of the ceiling of the Hypostyle Hall of Edfou fell with a great crash. At the moment there was no one underneath, and a panel reduced to powder was all the damage; two hours earlier or later, tourists would have been visiting the place, and it is impossible to say what disasters we should have had to deplore. It is therefore high time to take the Egyptian temples in hand one after the other, and without doing anything that might alter their character, to undertake works that may preserve them for some centuries to the admiration of the world.

As soon as we approach the door, the ear is struck by a loud noise; the tunes to which Egyptian workmen adapt their slightest movements are soon recognised. First there is a slow bass, the chant of

navvies at their work; then a lively, tripping melody, that of the children who are helping the navvies; now and again a sound rises which dominates all the others—the voices of the porters who are moving an enormous block of stone. Two distinct gangs share the field of work, I was going to say the field of battle. The first, on the west near the pylon, are removing the earth which served last year to bring down the capitals or the architraves, but which now prevents the finding and extraction of the shafts. It contains about thirty men. Arranged in an irregular line, and half bent over their task, they ply their pickaxes with short, sharp blows. Most of them are natives of Karnak, who, having nothing to do for the moment either in the fields or in the house, ask nothing better than to earn the high wage of from fivepence to sevenpence in the service of the *Antikah.*[1] They are engaged by the week or the day. They arrive every morning at dawn, the *touriah*, the short-handled pickaxe, on their shoulder, and immediately set to work under the surveillance of one of our native workmen. They each have two squads of four, five, or six children, who are hired for 2½d. a day per head on condition of themselves providing their tool, the basket of palm fibre in which to

[1] The people in Egypt call the Service des Antiquités familiarly by the term *Antikah.*

carry away the rubbish. Each group is like a free-lance in the regular companies of our royal armies. The navvy fills the basket with two or three strokes of his pickaxe, and as soon as a squad has its load complete, it goes, running and singing, to empty it into a Decauville wagon in waiting outside. Meanwhile the second squad is loaded in its turn, and while it is running to the wagon it meets the other returning. This to-and-fro movement, once begun, is only interrupted at noon for an hour, just time to eat and to take a brief rest, and then it begins again and continues till sunset. Twenty years ago girls were found in these squads, but now they remain at home and we have only boys. They range in age from eleven to five, but all are equally skilful and strong, all dowered with a shrill soprano voice and a throat that never suffers from hoarseness. The refrains they bawl out are generally unremarkable, but whenever a distinguished visitor or some high official presents himself, one of them improvises a new couplet for the occasion, and the rest repeat it in chorus. On my first visit to Egypt the boys who were working at Louxor, and who saw me arrive at the workshop always in a jacket with big pockets and under a large green umbrella, composed a couplet in my honour which they rattled out without fatigue for two mortal hours: "*Bachet-na taht ech-chamsieh*" ("Our pacha is

under the umbrella"); "*Bachet-na abou gabeîn*" ("Our pacha is the father with two pockets"). Those children are now men, but the tradition remains, and whenever I appear at Karnak the children of to-day intone the chant of former years.

Looking at the disproportion between the baskets, which hold at most 6 lbs. or 8 lbs. of earth, and the mound which has to be cleared away, we are tempted to pity our fate and to think we shall never be finished. But when we come back day after day and see the results, we are astonished at the rapidity with which the clearing away has progressed. It is a veritable ant-hill, the accomplishment of a colossal work by the infinitely little. In five minutes two wagons are full, and depart in all speed in the direction of the Oriental door, where we are filling up the breaches made by the peasants in the girdle wall of the ancient city. Before they have time to get back others are setting out to rejoin them; there is all day a perpetual rolling of wagons. The toy baskets of the children spread 15,000 cubic yards of earth in the Hypostyle Hall during the campaign of 1900. They will have removed the same quantity when the campaign of 1901 is ended.

The second gang consists only of men, about ten porters brought from Cairo, and about thirty strong fellows recruited at Louxor and Karnak.

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It works under the orders of Baskharoun Awad, who helped us so admirably last year to remove the kings from the tomb of Amenôthes,[1] and who has moved more stones than any one in the Museum. Each of the columns consists of thirteen tambours divided in two segments of equal dimensions, viz., twenty-six segments of 5 tons, *plus* an abacus of 10 tons, the whole column weighing 140 tons; the intact architraves weighing from 35 to 40 tons. Reckoning that we have sixteen whole columns and eight fragments of columns to raise before our work is done, it is easy to understand that if we wished to give up the ground in time to be of use to the Commission entrusted to examine the state of the foundations, we could not afford to lose a minute. Here again chance visitors imagine that the effort does not correspond with the magnitude of the task. They see about twenty men stirring around a very heavy block. Some are slightly lifting it with wooden levers, others place runners beneath it, and when they have slipped in the number required, they yoke themselves to the ropes and pull it along in cadence. The mass advances a few inches, knocks up against a neighbouring fragment, nearly falls; the men immediately put it right, and begin to

[1] Cf. Chapter XII.

draw it again. Half an hour, three-quarters of an hour, sometimes more, passes before they succeed in bringing it near a Decauville truck. It is lifted on to it with great difficulty, and a special squad wheels it away into the store, while its own men with Baskharoun's gang begin work on a fresh segment. The space produced each time is hardly noticeable, and yet by the end of the day six segments of 5 tons each have disappeared. The pieces of architraves and the abaci required rougher treatment, but they too end by yielding. When after being away for a week we take note of the progress made, we see that the heap is a yard less in height and that a large portion of the Hypostyle Hall is free up to the panelling. Nothing equals the endurance of our men, unless it be the suppleness with which they adapt their action to the position of each block, to its shape, dimensions, and to the position of the neighbouring blocks. When they come to the workshops for the first time it does not need a long apprenticeship before they are as good as their comrades, and after two or three days they are fit for the most complicated pieces of work. It would seem that they know by intuition the exact point in each stone with which it is best to begin in order to ensure the greatest result with the smallest effort. They never break or injure

anything, and get through all dangers without serious accident. Two or three grazed hands, two or three sprained feet make up all the casualties in a six months' campaign. Much of the skill acquired by their ancestors in the service of the Pharaohs has remained in their blood.

It was necessary to store the pieces without danger of confusing them, and M. Legrain admirably succeeded in so doing. To the north of the Hypostyle Hall, between the wall of Setouî I. and the temple of Phtah, was a flat space, and it was there that he made his depôt. The position of each column was indicated in length on the ground, and the position of each tambour for each column. A number of circles of small stones were made in advance and represented the courses of masonry. As soon as a piece was detached it was marked with the number of the column and with that of the course of masonry of which it formed a part in that column, then it was enclosed in the corresponding circle of stones. A plan continually filled in showed the progress made from day to day. Only two or three whole columns were found, and they were left on the spot to await the moment of being set up again. The others were so terribly destroyed by their fall that the pieces are mingled in inextricable confusion. The workmen attack the stones as they

come, and take them out; then M. Legrain has to decide to which column they belong and to fasten each in its respective place. Where they are intact or only slightly injured, there is but little hesitation and the difficulty is soon overcome. Unfortunately many of them, those that had already suffered from age or weather, were broken in falling, some even had crumbled into small pieces and only shapeless chips and lumps remained. Still it was possible to define the place that most of the débris held, at least those that possessed any fragment of painting or of hieroglyphics. We had to discuss the best means to take, whether to readjust them and join them sufficiently safely with cement to form a solid mass capable of supporting the upper courses without being crushed by the weight, or if it would be necessary to substitute blocks of new stone for the damaged ones. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof, and when the business of setting up the columns has to be taken in hand, we shall try to act in each particular case in the best possible way that circumstances permit. At the moment it was necessary to get rid of the mass of ruins that filled the Hypostyle Hall, to classify and co-ordinate the fragments, to piece together the dislocated units in a safe spot, and to arrange them so that we might easily be able to lay our hands on them when

required. This is more than half accomplished, and I hope that in ten weeks from now [1] M. Legrain will be able to give over the ground quite cleared to the examination of the Commission.

[1] Written in January, 1901.

XIV

THE TEMPLE OF THE THEBAN PHTAH AT KARNAK

M. Legrain did not find the earth he needed in one of the uninteresting heaps of rubbish that encumber the land at Karnak. He found it in the ruins extending at the north-east along the girdle wall, and he thus brought to light one of the prettiest temples imaginable, that of the Theban Phtah. Mariette had sent a few workmen into the place, and obtained thence several valuable monuments, that is, five or six panels with inscriptions. Since his death the site had been left to itself. A few Egyptologists may have carelessly glanced at it, not from real interest but in order to say that they had neglected nothing that was to be seen at Karnak. The excavation is not finished and the exterior dependencies are still buried, but the main building is free, and it deserves to be visited by the curious traveller and studied by the expert.

It touches one of the posterns of the town that we freed on the same occasion. Its outer wall ran

for about 150 feet along a street which, starting from the postern gate, went to join obliquely the north-east corner of the Hypostyle Hall. The gateway was of Gebeleîn sandstone; it stood up straight, surmounted by a bent gorgerin, and the sculptured and painted uprights stood out strongly on the whitewash with which the brick wall was covered. It led through a series of similar gateways and small courts to a portal supported by four columns with highly decorated capitals, behind which stood the pylon, a miniature pylon, hardly 24 or 27 feet high, with a rectangular opening and two towers. Beyond the pylon was a very small open-air court, then a pronaos with two columns, a Hypostyle Hall, and lastly the sanctuary flanked by two chapels for the members of the local triad; it is, in fact, a complete temple. All the parts are covered with sacred pictures and inscriptions, many of which still preserve their brightness of colour. The exterior of the aisles had received no official decoration, but the piety of the inhabitants had sketched sacred scenes or engraved pious formulas on it.

There, besides Phtah, his wife, Sokhît, the goddess with the head of a lioness, was worshipped, and their son Imouthes, the patron of scholars, as well as an old Theban scribe of the XVIIIth Dynasty, Amenôthes, son of

Pahapi, whom the people almost canonised for his fame in magic.[1] After accomplishing their duties in the temple, the most fervent of the faithful, those at least who had obtained some special favour by the power of Phtah or by the intercession of his companions, either themselves engraved or paid some one to engrave for them a bas-relief on the outer walls of the sanctuary, which showed them in prayer before one or other of the divinities. Some of these *ex voto* are in quite good style and do honour to the sculptors of the Græco-Roman period. The greater number, however, make no claim to be art and are the work of the dedicator himself, figures of gods out of the perpendicular, sgraffite in awkward hieroglyphics, portraits of worshippers who resemble in a most unfortunate way the figures chalked by street boys on old walls in European cities. Doubtless Phtah and Imouthes would forgive the poverty of execution in consideration for the feeling which prompted it, and, in fact, faith was strong among the poor folk who inhabited the ruined Thebes during the imperial epoch. Amonrâ certainly still monopolised most of their veneration, and he remained the master-god of their city. But his temple had been half destroyed by the mercenaries of Ptolemy

[1] The strange history of this personage is briefly related in "New Light on Ancient Egypt," chap. xxv.

Lathyrus at the beginning of the first century B.C., during the revolt of Upper Egypt in which Thebes definitely succumbed, and was not in a condition to serve for regular worship. Its courts, its hypostyles, its limestone and granite chambers, its corridors, were almost as much encumbered with dirt and rubbish as they are now. The secondary temples sufficed for the needs of the moment, and they alone were frequented by what remained of the population. Phtah seems to have been one of those that prospered under the first Emperors, but he was soon after abandoned. The roofs of his temple fell in, its portal and monumental gateways gave way, sand and bricks fallen from the neighbouring wall filled up its courts. At the moment when paganism ended it was in such a bad state that the Christians disdained to establish themselves there and transform it into a church.

To that circumstance we owe the possession of its bas-reliefs and inscriptions almost intact. Certainly here and there the personages lack limbs, and the inscriptions are mere fragments of lines, but there is no absolute defacement of the inscriptions nor systematic destruction of the figures, and the history of the building can still be read on the walls. The kings of the XIth and XIIth Dynasties are actually the most ancient of the Pharaohs of whom we have records, but they did not found it;

they only repaired or restored it. Every city in Egypt liked to entertain the master-gods of other cities. Thus Thebes, placed under the protection of Amon, gave hospitality to Phtah, the supreme divinity of Memphis, and it was by way of return, for Memphis had done as much for Amon. However, the first sanctuary of Theban Phtah was only an oratory. Neglected during the centuries of misery that followed the invasion of the Shepherd Kings, it was in a deplorable condition at the beginning of the XVIIIth Dynasty, when Thoutmôsis III. thought of remedying the destruction. He rebuilt it with the money he had gained during his Syrian campaigns, and enriched it with splendid gifts, a list of which is preserved on a stela. He respected the altars consecrated by his ancestors, but he built around them the halls we see to-day, and multiplied there his own image. The king, who may be seen on every part of the walls offering wine, milk, water, bread, and fruits to the mummy of Phtah, to the lioness-headed goddess Sokhît, to the lord Amonrâ and his wife Maout, is Thoutmôsis III. in twenty postures and in twenty different costumes. The relief is delicate, the action joyful, the expression of the faces smiling, the colour bright enough for us to guess what it must have been like formerly. The god enjoyed his good fortune in peace for about

a century, and then persecution raged against Amon. The fanatic Khouniatonou pursued him even unto the house of Phtah, erased his name and his emblems wherever he found them, and there, as elsewhere, did so much damage that the halls remained as though dishonoured. When the heresy disappeared, Setouî I. touched up the damaged pictures and inscriptions after a fashion, Phtah took up again the routine of his monotonous life, and continued it for eight or nine centuries without any notable occurrences. But his good fortune decreased with that of Thebes, his property was seized during the civil wars or the Assyrian and Persian invasions, his revenues were reduced to nothing, his walls fell into decay, and he was at the last extremity when the Ptolemies took upon themselves the charge of settling the destinies of Egypt. Their rule was favourable to him, for they rebuilt his pylon, his portal, his monumental gateways, the brick rampart which formed the boundary of his domain. They certainly had a right to inscribe their titles on what they restored, but by a strange derogation from Egyptian custom they only partly profited by it. If we examine the pictures which are introduced on the exterior of the bay of the pylon, we read the protocol of Thoutmôsis III. and that of Setouî—the first would have built the monument, the

second would have restored it—and at the same time easily recognise in these works of a so-called Pharaonic epoch the well-characterised peculiarities of Ptolemaic art. We see the soft round prominence, the slightly flabby muscling, the thick contours, and the neutral and often stupid expression of the face, the loose appearance of the body which is usual from the beginning of the Saîd renaissance, and the hieroglyphics themselves, carefully as they are cut, in no way resemble those of the XVIIIth or XIXth Dynasty. Only an artist living under the Ptolemies could have executed those sculptures, and yet he attributes them to sovereigns much more ancient. What reason had those who commissioned his labour so greatly to contravene traditional etiquette and to make the pylon they were setting up pass for the work of a Pharaoh of the XVIIIth Dynasty?

From the day of his accession the first Ptolemy set his mind on winning the affection of his people by his profound respect for the native religions, and his successors continued to imitate him. Wherever the Persians had caused ruins they repaired them to the best of their ability, and to their political piety the cities of the Saîd owe the possession of their magnificent temples, Denderah, Edfou, Ombos, Philæ. Thebes naturally attracted their attention, and not only such buildings as

Louxor or Karnak offered; their solicitude did not neglect the chapels scattered through the town, and that of Phtah profited like the others. The sacerdotal colleges, encouraged by their liberality, at the same time as they repaired the walls attempted to restore the ancient fortune of the gods, but there they met with serious difficulties. Not only had the sacred property been seized by kings or private individuals, but the acts of donation and the title-deeds which would have made it possible to claim restitution were destroyed or lost. The clergy set to work above all to reconstitute their archives. They collected wherever they could documents which seemed to them to commemorate some gift of a Pharaoh, and when authentic documents were not forthcoming they did not hesitate to manufacture apocryphal ones. Criticism of inscriptions was not then highly developed, and the people accepted with entire credulity all the fables told them. We see here and there forged archaic inscriptions, in which Pharaohs of the most diverse Dynasties, those even of the Ist or IInd, related how they had assigned such or such lands, such or such revenues, yearly pensions of bread and perfumes, oxen, stuffs, wine, precious metals to such or such a local god who had saved the whole country from famine or plague, who had put an end to a dangerous war by

means of an eclipse, or who had freed a daughter of a foreign king from the evil spirit that possessed her. The clergy of the Theban Phtah acted like the rest, and M. Legrain brought to light in the courts part of the doubtful architrave that they had placed there. It consists of five stelæ in moderate preservation, which all show an illustrious Pharaoh in adoration before the god. The most ancient was already only a mere fragment when the priests obtained possession of it, but a fragment of the greatest value. It showed that an Antouf of the XIth Dynasty had already associated Phtah with Amon and Maout, the patrons of Thebes. The next stela is a veritable deed of gift by which Thoutmôsis III. grants Phtah an income to celebrate a solemn fête in his honour every year. Damaged in parts under Khouniatonou, it was re-engraved under Setouî I., and is, in the main, complete. The three last Stelae are, like the first, only fragments of rather confused inscriptions, and only one among them has the value of a title-deed, that in which Setouî sets forth how it came into his mind to reconvey to the god what he had been despoiled of by the heretic princes. The restoration of the pylon in the names of Thoutmôsis III. and of Setouî I. was destined to confirm the testimony of these stelæ: where those declared that the two sovereigns had

worked for the greatest glory of Phtah, the uprights of the gateway exhibited their portrait from the very threshold and proved that they spoke the truth. It is most probable that the clergy invented nothing on that head. They had only to restore a decoration that had really dated from the Theban age, but which was now destroyed, or which had at least become too indistinct to prove anything with certainty. The forgery here does not consist in entirely fabricating a document, but in replacing the primitive work by a copy with the idea of giving it the appearance of the original itself.

In clearing out the chamber which opens on the right of the sanctuary, there were picked out from the heaps of sand fragments of black granite, evidently the remains of two or three idols destroyed by the early Christians; a lioness's head still intact proved that there had once been there a grim Sokhît, Phtah's beloved, the one of his wives whom he most often associated with himself in his worship. M. Legrain patiently sorted the fragments, and succeeded in piecing together a complete image of the goddess. She really looks most attractive; and although no king's name is to be found on her, she doubtless belongs to the XVIIIth Dynasty, and goes back to the Amenôthes III. who dedicated several hundred

statues to Sokhît in the sanctuary of Maout alone. Replaced in her old position at the back of the hall, she produces a deep impression on visitors, who, entering the doorway without suspecting her presence, suddenly fall "under the place of her face," according to the phrase usual in such cases in the religious inscriptions. The natives have a terror of her which daily increases. They declare that she stares at them from the empty sockets of her eyes when they enter her chamber and when they leave it: she notes their dress, their gait, their features, their voice, in order to recognise them later at need. They will soon declare that she does not remain in her place during the night, but secretly leaves it and prowls about the ruins seeking some one to devour. Until now all the monuments, statues, naos, stelæ, sarcophagi, mummies, unearthed in the course of the excavations, have been sent to the Museum without delay, provided that their weight or dimensions did not fix them immovable to the spot. The people of Karnak impatiently await the hour when we shall rid them of this disquieting person, but I fear that hour will not strike for them as soon as they wish. Indeed, I believe that it is time to drop the custom, and I hope we shall be able to leave on the spot, if not all the objects found, at least those which can be saved from the

rapacity of the natives or from the covetousness of foreign collectors. Amenôthes II. furnished an example last year [1] when we refused to move him from Bibân-el-Molouk. Sokhît shall not leave the chapel assigned to her in the harem of her divine husband, and if my attempt succeeds, Khonsou will not desert Thebes for Gizeh. The temples will be gradually repopulated, and will become what they were formerly, the house in which the gods dwelt, visible to mortal eyes in all their many and various forms.[2]

[1] Cf. Chapters X., XI., and XII.

[2] I was not able to carry out my intentions. The next year (1902) men of the Cheîkh Abd-el-Gournah got into the tomb of Amenôthes II., robbed the royal mummy, stole the boat mentioned in Chapters XI. and XII., and although the men were known, they were not punished. Both Amenôthes II. and the Sokhît remained in their places, but all fresh monuments not sufficiently protected by their size and weight were, in accordance with the old custom, henceforward dispatched to the Museum.

XV

KARNAK: LEGENDS AND SUPERSTITIONS

Our workpeople, men and boys, are nearly all recruited in Karnak: only a few come from Louxor. They represent the medium type of the Upper Egypt peasant with his qualities and defects, his religious beliefs and his superstitions. As a rule he is patient and gentle, industrious as long as you whip him, sure to idle and loaf as soon as the surveillance is withdrawn. He is sober, and is contented for a whole day with three or four galettes with an onion for relish, and with turbid water to drink. But this is from necessity, for when fortune smiles on him he gorges himself with victuals and drink, so that he is quite besotted until digestion is over. He is not brutal to his wife, he loves his children, and if he beats his animals it is without malice: a stick falling rhythmically on a donkey laden with corn or nitrous earth, the *sebakh* with which he manures his fields, marks time in pleasant fashion for the donkey's trot and the guide's steps. His religion

consists in reciting by heart a few chapters of the Koran, and in praying every day at the appointed times with the gestures belonging to the ritual. He is charitable towards those poorer than himself and very hospitable. The better we come to know him, the more we realise that he belongs to a good race, and the more pleasure we have in talking to him, but he is very reserved with strangers, especially with Europeans. He fears that the European will laugh at his ideas or will use against him words he may have let fall when off his guard, and I must confess that his mistrust is only too often justified. But we tame him when we spend days in his company, occupied in directing his work, and persuade him that we have no evil intentions towards him. Once he begins to talk, his tongue runs away with him, and there is no tale that he will not tell you as long as you will listen to his chatter.

All the ancient sites are more or less bewitched, but Karnak with its magnificent monuments is pre-eminently the enchanted land—*el-ardh marsoud.* A tradition, transmitted from father to son through two changes of religion, keeps alive among them the memory of the treasures contained in the sanctuary of Amon at the period of Theban greatness and even later. Gold shone on the wood of the doors, on the bronze of the ornaments and

statues, on the limestone of the walls or on the granite of the obelisks, without mentioning the gold ingots and vases kept in the sacristies. The inscription engraved on the pedestal of the obelisk set up by the Queen Hatshopsouîtou assures us that it was gilded from top to bottom, and describes new generations asking how sufficient metal could ever have been procured for the purpose: "I do not know, I do not know by what means it was possible to do this thing, a mountain of gold, the summit of which reaches to heaven." The gilding has long since been rubbed off, and no trace of it is to be distinguished, but the fellah continues to believe that it is there. If any one does not see it, it is because the old magicians, those incomparable men of learning, have cast a charm on it which hides it from all eyes. Any one clever enough to exorcise the spell would suddenly see the obelisk sparkle in the sun as at the time of its first freshness. And it is not the only one of the monuments of Karnak which thus deceives the visitor. Most of the blocks of granite, alabaster, or even of limestone scattered over the ground, are also under a spell. More than one guard has taken me mysteriously to one of them lying half-buried in an isolated pit, and after making sure that no one was spying on us, has knocked it with his stick and told me to notice the

metallic sound that followed: the magician has veiled the brightness of the gold, but was not clever enough to disguise the sound. If the stone was broken to the recital of an appropriate spell, the gold would immediately reappear. Not a year passes but a Moghrebin, a man from Tunis or Algiers or Morocco, comes to try his luck. He arrives on the day and at the hour prescribed by the books of magic, draws the circle, burns the incense, mutters the invocations. The fellahs declare that many fail, but that those who succeed enrich themselves for the rest of their life. Genii naturally watch over these treasures, and sometimes defend them or distribute them to individuals whom their caprice delights to honour. One of them, who is a negro of the name of Morgâni, inhabits the northern doorway of the temple of Montou, which for that reason we call *Bab-el-abd*, the Door of the Slave. About twenty years ago the captain of a boat laden with lentils and beans was obliged through stress of weather to cast anchor opposite Karnak. As he lay alongside a beggar came up and asked first for an *ardeb*[1] of lentils, then for half the quantity, then for a quarter; he was allowed at last to take away as much as he could hold in the hollow of his hands. The beggar thanked the captain and gave him a

[1] About 330 lbs.

KARNAK. PTOLEMAIC GATEWAY IN FRONT OF THE TEMPLE OF KHONSOU.

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written paper, advising him to go by night to the Door of the Slave. If he knocked three times with his finger on a certain stone, a negro would come out, to whom he was to say: "Oh, Morgâni, look at this paper," and he was to wait. The night before his departure the captain repaired to the Door of the Slave, knocked three times, and showed the paper. The negro immediately led him into an inner chamber, gave him gold in the same quantity as he had given the beggar lentils, and then added: "If you had given an *ardeb* you would have received an *ardeb;* depart your ways and profit by the lesson, and henceforth be more generous."

All the genii are not equally amiable. The monumental doorway of the south, that which closes the avenue of Rams and precedes the Temple of Khonsou, serves as dwelling-place for a *lakhia*, that is, a dwarf with a big head and crooked legs, adorned with a formidable beard. He walks abroad in the mists of the evening, and takes the air in the surrounding places. If a passing stranger laughs at his grotesque appearance, he jumps at his throat and strangles him. The banks of the crescent-shaped pond that has taken the place of the old sacred lake of the Temple of Maout have a very bad reputation, and the natives do not like to venture there after sunset. They would run the risk of meeting

an enormous cat who walks there on moonless nights and whose eyes shine in the darkness like two balls of fire. She fascinates those on whom she fixes her eyes, and drags them into the water and they are drowned. The cat ceases her prowling at full moon, and a woman, scantily clothed in a short clinging white tunic, takes her place. She is very beautiful, it is said, and solicits young men with her sweet voice, but as soon as she has seduced one of them she smothers him. There is no mystery about the origin of these supernatural beings. The *lakhia* of the Temple of Khonsou is the Bîsou of the old Egyptians, the dwarf who came from the Pouanît, and who was laughed at by all on account of his enormous head, hairy cheeks, crooked legs, and head-dress of feathers. The cat and the white lady are two different forms of Maout, one animal, the other purely human. Here, as in many other lands, the gods are neither dead nor in exile; they are still in their hereditary domains, but they have changed their nature and have become demons. Sometimes they celebrate the ancient rites with the pomp of a former day. More than one fellah kept out late has seen a mysterious cortège passing by night from Karnak to Louxor. A troop of horse-men heads the procession, then comes a Sultan mounted on a white horse and surrounded by foot-

guards, then women carried in litters, and a confused crowd of soldiers and common people. All these shades walk silently, seeing nothing of what is going on around them, but if the spectator recites the Musulman profession of faith—"*There is no God if it is not God and Mohammed is the prophet of God*"—they vanish as if carried off by a whirlwind.

Once or twice a year the old sacred lake of the Temple of Amon is illuminated and a golden dahabieh sails round it. The rowers are statues of gold, the cabins are filled with gold furniture. Whoever likes may go aboard and seize the treasure, then return to land without hindrance, provided that during the adventure he does not utter a word. There is no example of a fellah being able to restrain himself from crying "Ah!" or invoking Allah at the sight of so much treasure spread out before him: then everything vanishes, and the foolish fellow, falling into the water, has to swim ashore. The people of Karnak declare that Mariette alone was able to keep silent, and that is why there are so many gold jewels in the Cairo Museum. I have been told how a peasant of Karnak, walking by night along the sacred lake, saw the boat moored to the shore. As a brilliant light came from it and an echo of strange voices and a roaring of distant daraboukahs, he did not

dare enter it, but seeing the stake to which the rope was tied, and by the side of the stake the mallet used to knock it into the ground, he seized them and ran home as fast as his legs could carry him. Once there he declared that the two objects were of fine gold; he sold them, and that was the origin of his fortune. The story is well known and was evidently inspired by the remembrance of the ancient Theban fêtes. The nocturnal tour is the solemn procession of Amon. The king led the god in triumph from his temple of Karnak to his temple of Louxor, and then brought him back. The golden dahabieh is the ark of Amon, the picture of which appears on the walls a hundred times, with its cabin, furniture, pilot, and crew of divinities. On certain days and nights it was sent on to the lake to perform mysteries. It turned about for some hours before the eyes of the faithful, then was lifted on to the shoulders of the priests, and returned to the depths of the sanctuary.

The stories of the "Arabian Nights" have made us familiar with *djinns*, and they swarm at Karnak and in its environs. From time to time a light appears on the summit of the pylon of the Ptolemies, and then, after becoming so brilliant that the eye cannot endure it, it is suddenly extinguished: it is the *djinns* mani-

festing themselves. It is unwise to speak of them even in the daytime, for you never know if they are not invisible near the talkers and may be offended by the conversation. They fall in love with pretty girls, and pursue them into corners, while the *djinniahs*, the female *djinns*, fall in love with handsome, vigorous young men. When a young man who is both well off and in good health does not marry, he is accused of having a *djinniah* for wife, and all sorts of evil rumours about him are spread abroad. I was told of one of the most notable inhabitants of Louxor who long lived with a *djinniah*. She gave him recipes for fattening and taking care of the cattle, she indicated the hiding-places of antiquities or treasure, she gave him such good counsel in his business affairs that he quickly grew very wealthy. When he was just touching his fortieth year he tired of this illegitimate union and sought to marry, but all the girls whom he courted fell ill and died one after the other. At length he managed to get engaged to a girl of a Cairo family, and the *djinniah*, prevented by distance, did not succeed in hindering the marriage. She revenged herself, nevertheless; for no sooner did the young wife arrive at Louxor than she was attacked by diseases that robbed her of her good looks, and her three children were born weak and sickly. The

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male *djinns* are less ferocious and more easily pardon infidelities. They are sometimes confused with spirits of an inferior sort, the *afrîtes*, who delight in playing all sorts of tricks like our goblins, but who are generally not at all terrible. They unceremoniously enter European dwellings, and a house belonging to the Service des Antiquités is one of their favourite resorts. It is true that it was built on the site of a disused burial-ground, and that some of the *afrîtes* who assemble there are merely ghosts of the departed. In the daytime nothing unusual happens. Once only M. Chauvin's native cook—M. Chauvin is the employee of the Service who lives there—heard a noise like the rattling of old iron in his kitchen, and ran away in a great fright, exclaiming that a devil had got among his saucepans. At night it is unwise to walk about the house without a light; there is risk of knocking up against a phantom taking a stroll and of receiving a hard blow. Last January M. Chauvin, wishing to rise early in order to start at dawn on a hunting expedition, told his servant Kamal not to go back to Karnak, but to sleep in a room next his office. Kamal, fearing to be alone, invited a friend to keep him company, and the precaution was not unnecessary. Scarcely were they in bed when a little dog entered the room, they could not tell how, and after smelling

at them, frisked about them for nearly an hour, barking as if he wished to bite them. Soon after they had with difficulty chased him away, a dozen children or little men appeared to them, who danced for a long time, clapping their hands and putting out their tongues. They could not get free of them till the morning, when M. Chauvin, getting up, summoned them to set out for the place where they had to lie in wait for the game. A good way to frighten the *afrîtes*, at Karnak as everywhere, is to put a little bread with a pinch of salt in the place they habitually frequent. But the best way is not to be afraid of them. One of our workmen at Gournah, going down into the crypt of a tomb lately opened, felt his arm grasped by some one he did not see; without being disconcerted, he stretched out his hand at hazard and gripped so hard that his aggressor melted between his fingers without doing him any harm. There are very few of our men who have not met *afrîtes* and who have not some adventure to recount similar to the one I have just related.

Every individual who is assassinated or accidentally killed is changed into an *afrîte* and haunts the place where he died until the last traces of his blood are effaced. In 1884, while we were working in the Temple of Louxor, four of the workmen who were cleaning the

roof of one of the lateral halls of the sanctuary fell from a height of 30 feet to 36 feet. Three of them were killed on the spot; the fourth jumped up again, unhurt, and ran off as fast as his legs could carry him to his village of Bayadîyeh, at the south of Louxor. The next day one of the Copts who lived in an adjoining house told me that his wife had been awakened in the middle of the night by cries that had no human sound. She opened her window a little, and by the light of the moon saw the three men who had been killed the day before walking in the ruins, shouting and waving their arms. I had the curiosity to inquire about them this year, and learned that they were still occasionally seen or heard. I was even shown yellowish stains in the hall where they were killed, said to be the marks of their blood, but I could not discover if they were dangerous, or if any misdeeds were laid to them other than disturbing the rest of the river-side dwellers on moonlight nights. *Afrîtes* of that sort abound everywhere, and some of them have a European origin. About half-way between Louxor and Karnak, you skirt on the left three enclosures, scantily planted with trees. They are three cemeteries—Protestant, Catholic, and Coptic—placed by the roadside in order to

remind tourists that men die even in Egypt, and that a journey of pleasure may suddenly end in a grave in a foreign land.

One of the first guests of the Protestant cemetery was, it is said, an English soldier, who, coming down from Ouady-Halfah, where he was in garrison, bathed in the river at Louxor and was drowned. It is his custom to wander among the tombs in the enclosure, but he confines himself to darting fiery glances at the living persons who traverse the road. Sometimes, however, he comes out and walks behind them, and accompanies them to the first houses of Karnak or to the little bridge near Karnak. Another English soldier, who perished in climbing the Great Pyramid about 1882, haunts the plain of Gizeh at sunset, and I myself heard a French mechanic spoken of at Rodah in 1884 who, caught in some machinery ten or twelve years before, returned at intervals to see if all was going well at the factory. Foreign spectres have not yet invaded Karnak, but the supernatural beings known to our workmen there are of very ancient native origin. The Thebans of the XXth Dynasty must have been frightened by tales resembling those that their descendants have told me, and thus the beliefs of Pharaonic Egypt are for the most part perpetuated in the superstitions of modern Egypt.

XVI

FISHING FOR STATUES IN THE TEMPLE OF KARNAK

For a year and eight months we have been fishing for statues in the Temple of Karnak. We began about the end of November, 1903, and have continued uninterruptedly until now,[1] except for the usual holiday seasons and the pauses needed by the workmen. Seven hundred stone monuments have already come out of the water, and we are not yet at the end. Twice luck seemed to desert us, and twice, after days of distress, it smiled on us again. Statues whole and in fragments, busts, mutilated trunks, headless bodies, bodiless heads, vases on which there were only broken feet, Pharaohs enthroned, queens standing upright, priests of Amon and individuals holding naos, or images of gods, in front of them, crouching, kneeling, sitting, found in all the attitudes of their

[1] February, 1905.

KARNAK. AVENUE OF SPHINXES LEADING TO THE MAIN ENTRANCE.

To face p. 168.

profession or rank, in limestone, in black or pink granite, in yellow or red sandstone, in green breccia, in schist, in alabaster—indeed, a whole population returns to the upper air and demands shelter in the galleries of the Museum.

During the four years that the Service des Antiquités has devoted to work at Karnak, I made it a law to myself never to abandon any part until it had been thoroughly explored—walls, flooring, sub-structures—and until all the remains of earlier monuments that could be found there were brought out. It is due to this strictness of mine that M. Legrain discovered several masterpieces, the statue of the god Khonsou, the group of Thoutmôsis IV. and of his mother, Tiâ, the colossus of a Sanouosrît IV. who flourished under the XIIIth Dynasty, the triumphal bas-reliefs of Amenôthes II. on his return from Syria, after the raids of his first expedition. We are now carrying on our campaign in the avenue that extends to the south of the Hypostyle Hall on the two sides of the seventh pylon, where borings formerly taken revealed to me the presence of a number of stelæ and statues. It produced during the last months of 1902 about fifteen colossi, which formerly stood right and left along the southern façade of the pylon,

and then lay dismembered under the rubbish. Now they have been pieced together again, and stand almost in their ancient places. Later on, during the winter of 1902–3, we discovered a large number of limestone blocks, ornamented with marvellous bas-reliefs, some coming from a chapel of Sanouosrît I., but the greater number from an edifice built by Amenôthes I. about the beginning of the XVIIIth Dynasty. Thoutmôsis III. had used them as waste material to bank up the pavement of the court while erecting on so vast a scale the propylæa of the temple of Amon. The débris of Sanouosrît I. are still very scanty and we shall probably have to treat them as fragments for the Museum, and send them to Cairo. Those of Amenôthes I. are so many that I decided to reconstruct the building to which they belonged. M. Legrain discovered the plan and brought together the scattered elements under the happy inspiration of a German architect, M. Wefels, who had come to Egypt for his health, but we have not yet chosen the site. When we have selected it, it will be an affair of only a few months, and visitors to Karnak will be able to admire in the light of day a monument buried by Thoutmôsis III. immediately after his first victories, and which

no human eye had seen for more than 3,500 years.[1]

It was while getting one of the most beautiful of the blocks out of the ground, about the end of November, 1903, that M. Legrain extricated the pieces of an alabaster colossus. The rise of the river had been greater than usual, and the level of the infiltrations was high enough to impede his operations. When the first fragments were brought away he distinguished vague outlines of statues in the mud at the bottom of the cavity, which the water, oozing in on every side, had soon filled. He ordered them to be got out without feeling much emotion in regard to the find, for the success of the preceding years had made the joys of discovery pall on him. But while they were being torn from their bed of mud one of the workmen exclaimed that there were more of them beneath their feet. There were others under those, then others again, and still others. They seemed to sprout among the men as fast as they picked them out. Most of them were only of second-rate style and interest, merely good studio pieces,

[1] The site has since been chosen, but the re-building has yet to be begun: in order to commence operations I must find time one winter to stay at Thebes longer than usual.

but some stood out as of no ordinary make: a group of a prince and his wife seated side by side with their daughter standing against their legs; two large heads in pink granite of Sanouosrît I., of haughty mien and vigorous style; a sovereign pontiff of Amon in speckled black and white granite, crouching lumpishly, his arms crossed, his thighs up to his ears; a statuette in a white stone tinted with pale green, that the natives immediately called emerald root. About the end of December there were forty intact statues in the house of the Service, the fragments of about twenty were awaiting in the workshop a stroke of fortune that might restore the portions they lacked, and the extraction of them went on without any notable pause. Stone predominated, but oxidised bronze began to abound, uræi incrusted with variegated enamels, heads or points of sceptres, the mounts of gigantic eyes fallen from some colossus, blades of tools, little figures of Osiris-mummy, several of them of admirable finish. The farther we went the more evident it became that it was not chance alone that had brought so many dissimilar objects to this place. They must have been accumulated there on purpose, and served perhaps to conceal a more valuable deposit, sacred plates and cups or gold and

silver statues buried by the Theban priests in troublous times. It was natural that M. Legrain should have the idea that there was treasure, the treasure of Amon, buried there under the stone and in the mud, and although I could not agree with him, his opinion sustained him through the heavy fatigues of his long campaign, and still possesses his mind.

Meanwhile the rumour spread that we were doing wonders at Karnak, and, assisted by the Oriental imagination, the monuments were not emerging by tens or even by hundreds, but by thousands, and they were of a colossal size; the villagers had even weighed them and reckoned the value in current coin of the masses of gold of which M. Legrain predicted the imminent arrival. Tourists, who are numerous at Louxor in the winter months, came in crowds every day to the environs of the pylon, and if they were quiet and orderly were willingly admitted to the spectacle. Fishing for statues actually went on under their eyes. The trench dug in the north-west corner of the courtyard against the wall of the Hypostyle Hall was dry in parts, and in others scattered over with pools. The workshop was set up in the largest of them, which was the last on the south side. Every morning twenty men, using old petroleum cans for pails, drew off the 3 or 4

feet of muddy water which filled it and stored it in a reservoir situated a little above, and separated from the large pool by a thin partition of earth. When only mud of a certain consistency was left, they attacked it with the pickaxe, stopping now and then to feel gently with their feet till resistance under their heel seemed to point to the existence of a block. Then they dropped the pickaxe and used their hands, for fear that an awkward blow of the instrument might cause irreparable damage. When the contour and dimensions of the object were in some degree defined, they raised it as well as they could by means of wooden levers, and tried to drag it to the edge by a series of slow jolts. If this had no effect, or the weight was too great, they wound a rope several times round it, and harnessing themselves to its end, three or four of them pulled with caution. That was the particular moment of the operation that tourists, warned by their dragomans, impatiently awaited. The mud was tenacious, the rope tended to slip and escape, the bottom of the pool offered insufficient support. But most often after a long inertia the piece suddenly and most unexpectedly detached itself from the mud, and the workmen, losing their balance, fell one over the other, splashing the people standing round. The tourists burst into laughter, and most of them ran away. A few,

however, remained in order to witness the recognition of the statue. The body and face were washed, sponged, wiped, brushed, and such vigorous treatment was generally quickly successful. In less than five minutes the features of the face appeared, the inscriptions became legible, details of costume or style completed the information furnished by the inscriptions, and we knew if the fresh arrival was the high priest Ramses-nakhouîtou of the XXth Dynasty or the lord Anakhoui of the XIIIth. In the evening, before leaving the place, the partition was opened, and the water drawn out of the pool in the morning was sent back. The liquid spread in the twinkling of an eye, and protected the spot against night attacks more effectually and at less expense than a picket of sentries.

Thieves could do nothing under those conditions, and they regretfully recognised it from the very first. That the Service alone should benefit from such continuous good fortune was a cause of indignation and inconsolable grief to them and the merchants whom they provided with goods. They had come not only from Louxor but from the whole of Egypt, from Keneh, Siout, Mellaoui, Cairo, and they prowled round our workshops vainly invoking all the saints in the Coptic calendar or the Musulman tradition for any sort of means

by which they might derive some small advantage from this miraculous draught. Even if they had corrupted our workmen or overseers, a circumstance neither impracticable nor difficult, it would have availed them nothing: the valuable pieces were too few and too heavy for any one to risk taking them off by day while work was in progress, and the deep water made it impossible to work by stealth at night. Most of them renounced their plans on account of these obstacles, but some would not confess themselves defeated, and changed their tactics, concentrating their efforts on the stores in which the statues were kept before their despatch to Cairo. They were closed in by thick walls, touching the house occupied by M. Legrain and his family, and watched day and night by two of our men. For greater safety M. Legrain shut up the smaller pieces in his office, and requisitioned two vigorous men from the omdeh of Karnak, whom he associated with our guards. It was this very precaution that did the mischief. One of the notables of the district arranged to pass off on us two professional thieves; he did not hope to steal everything from us, but one object had excited his covetousness—the statuette said to be of emerald root, and that popular credulity valued at 10,000 Egyptian pounds—that is, about £10,400 sterling. The chief

personages of Louxor liked to look at it often, and one day, about the middle of January, one of them said to M. Legrain in a slightly forced humorous manner, "Hide it well, or I shall have it stolen." M. Legrain laughed heartily, but as soon as he was alone, locked it up in another place, and replaced it by two statuettes of little value. It was well that he did so. That very night persons well informed of the lay of the land scaled the outer wall, pierced the wall of the store itself, and without making any noise carried off the two understudies. Inquiry proved that the raid had been carried out by the two extra guards; they were caught, but firmly denied their guilt. We began to despair of ever discovering anything when an anonymous denunciation revealed the names of the receivers and of the village they inhabited. The instigator of the theft remained unpunished, his accomplices refusing to name him, but we recovered possession of the monuments so craftily taken away, and the thieves were punished. Things will now be quiet for a time.

The excavations went forward without, it seemed, exhausting or impoverishing the site. So deep into the earth did the men penetrate that they reached the level of the constant infiltrations of the river. To fight the water we had to set up two hand-pumps and *chadoufs* at the side of the

cavity, and those means soon proving insufficient, we set up a steam-pump. The pit became wider and longer the more it was dug out, and surveillance became more difficult. But it did not absorb M. Legrain so much that he could not draw up a catalogue of our wealth. The historical value equals, if it does not surpass, the artistic value. The greater part transports us to one of the most obscure epochs of Egyptian history, that which, extending from the XIXth Dynasty to the Persian Conquest, saw the military empire of Thebes transformed into a theocratic principality. The high priests of Amon of the epoch of the Ramses began it, then those who were contemporaries of the Bubastes, such as Horsiêsis, whose name even we do not know, but who was pontiff and king about the middle of the eighth century. When the male line failed and women alone survived to rule Southern Egypt, new documents furnish details of their lives. We read how the Pharaohs, reconciling respect for tradition with the necessities of their sovereign authority, sent their daughters one after the other to reign over the domain of Amon. What a series of initiations they had to undergo before legally entering into the pontifical family! They were introduced to the god with great ceremony, and if they conciliated his favour, were immediately

adopted by the reigning princess; they only actually became queens on the death of their adopted mother. Thenceforward they were the legitimate wives of Amonrâ, free to choose whom they pleased to represent him, but, like the queens of Madagascar, they only possessed the externals of power. They had an hereditary guardian, a sort of chief officer of state, descended from a race devoted to the Saîtes and who administered military and civil affairs. The other periods of history are less abundantly represented up to that time. But they have given us a few monuments of extraordinary beauty, the torso in pink granite of one of the Pharaohs of the XVIIIth Dynasty and the two statuettes in black granite of Amenemhaît III. The most interesting of all perhaps is a little figure which might be a portrait of Amenôthes IV. or of Aî, the heretic king. It is not carved in real stone but in petrified wood, probably a piece of one of the gigantic nicolias, remarkable specimens of which are seen on the tablelands of Mokattam to the east of Cairo. In spite of the incredible hardness of the material, it is modelled with rare certainty and suppleness. If the sculptor had used soft limestone he would not have succeeded in endowing it with greater charm and delicacy.

Now, how is the accumulation of so many

valuable things in one place to be accounted for? M. Legrain persists in believing in the treasure, and would not be in the least astonished if statues in precious metal followed statues in stone. Others have no such rich hope, but imagine that at some time of danger the priests of Amon desired to protect the best of the monuments consecrated by their ancestors from the enemy, and for that reason made the hiding-place we are emptying. These hypotheses present no great improbability. The Theban priesthood was often obliged to bury its treasure during the wars or revolutions that devastated the city, but I doubt if a spot as easy of access as our courtyard would have seemed to them sufficiently secret in such a case. Besides, gold and silver so hidden does not ordinarily remain long under ground. When they escape the enemy and danger is over, the priests hasten to take them out again and to restore them to their accustomed places. If ever the pit at Karnak held gold and silver statues, they stayed there but a very short time, and we have no chance of finding any there unless some got lost in the mud. The stone statues, no matter the value we give them, had very little interest for the Egyptians of the Ptolemaic age. The question of art did not exist for them, and in the works so valuable to us they saw only

ex-voto offered long ago by persons famous in their generation, but whose names were for the most part forgotten. They used some to repair the flooring of the temple, why then should they have been anxious to preserve the others? No one would have been greatly grieved if the enemy had broken them or carried them off as trophies. The Egyptian would only have cared if it had been a question of divine images; it grieved him exceedingly if the foreigner carried off those, and he rejoiced exceedingly when a victorious Pharaoh, even though he was a Greek, repatriated them.

For myself, I see a simpler solution of the problem with which we are confronted. The burying of these pieces took place during the first half of the Macedonian rule; the style of some of the statues is a proof, as is the presence of large copper coins with the Lagidian eagle. Ptolemy I. and his successors worked much at Thebes; they rebuilt the sanctuary, restored the columns of the Hypostyle Hall, repaired the temple of Phtah and some of the buildings which surround the Sacred Lake. All that had suffered, and in addition the *ex-voto* accumulated during centuries filled up the corridors and courtyards. The restorations finished, they would not have thrown away objects which were the personal property of the god as refuse, nor have sold or destroyed

them. They treated them in the way customary on such occasions with the barbarians as with the Greeks. They dug a pit for them in the Court of the Seventh Pylon, a *favissa* into which they were thrown with due ceremonies. It is certainly not the only one. As for the royal mummies, the quantity was so great that a single hiding-place would never have sufficed to contain them. I have every hope that our future excavations will reveal the pits in which *ex-voto* of more ancient times were buried.

XVII

THE PHARAOHS BY ELECTRIC LIGHT

THE Pharaohs would not have understood it in the least. When I say the Pharaohs, it is only a loose way of speaking: only one Pharaoh lived at Thebes, the others sleep in peace in some hidden place which we shall one day discover, or are exhibited in glass cases in the Cairo Museum. As a matter of fact it is Amenôthes II., and he alone, who would not have understood it. The electric light has just been installed in his tomb, and every day this winter,[1] from nine o'clock in the morning to two o'clock in the afternoon, he has seen the light switched on and off at the will of the tourists, with a rapidity and intensity of which he had not any idea during his reign. An old Egyptian romance describes the adventures of a family of ghosts who had returned and were living comfortably with their mummies in a tomb, lighted by a wonderful talisman, an incantation written on papyrus by the hand of Thot himself. When his first fear was over, Amenôthes would certainly

[1] This was written in 1903.

imagine that a well-intentioned sorcerer had made him a present of a similar conjuring book, and he would return fervent thanks to the gods. The whole Academy of Sciences would waste their time in trying to persuade him that it was not so.

Ever since my return to Egypt I had been struck with the lamentable condition into which the tombs of the Theban kings had fallen during my absence; everywhere the colours had faded, the bas-reliefs had been soiled, and it seemed as if a blackish gauze veil had been placed between them and the spectator. The fault was solely due to the means of lighting employed by the visitors, and which the Service des Antiquités was obliged to allow. In former times when travellers were rare, and when there were only two or three hundred at most each winter, it did no great harm to allow them to use candles or even torches: there was not enough smoke each time for it to be destructive. But to-day visitors throng in crowds of two or three hundred, and their total number during the season exceeds four thousand. So it was no longer a few candles, but hundreds of candles, that were taken through the galleries and chambers, leaving trails of soot in their track, and in addition there was the dragoman who lighted up the most celebrated pictures with magnesium wire. That was for-

bidden, and the guardians of the Service received orders to stop it, but two or three piastres of bakhshîsch cleverly distributed closed the guardians' eyes. For several hours the tombs would remain infected by smoke which made the atmosphere unbearable, and which, settling down on the ceilings and walls, soiled them more and more every day. A few years hence, and the tomb of Setouî I., of Ramses III., V., and IX., the most frequented of all, would look like a succession of blackened cavities where you would no longer be able to distinguish even the faded outline of former paintings. The only way to prevent this evil from causing total destruction was to install the electric light as soon as possible. On one hand it harms the objects very little, and on the other the light which it gives is strong enough to prevent tourists regretting their pieces of magnesium wire. Numberless difficulties, however, opposed its use. The Valley of the Kings is some miles from the nearest wells: where could the necessary water be procured? Would it be possible to construct the works in so concealed a spot that the building should not spoil the admirable site chosen by the Egyptians for the tombs of their kings? Could the smell of petrol, the noise of the piston, and the rumbling of the flywheel be suppressed or merely moderated? Last, though not least, where could we obtain the

six or eight hundred pounds which the undertaking required? How the Service des Antiquités managed to provide the sum required is a complicated and tiresome story which would have no interest for the public. The money found, the Department of Public Works gave us full permission to do what we liked, and the rest went of itself. A little to the east of the hypogeum of Setouî I. there was a tomb almost entirely fallen to ruin, that of Ramses XI., the entrance of which was used as a dining-room. The dragomans set up tables there, and the tourists lunched under the protection of the king. It was selected for the place in which to install the dynamos, and was delivered over to the electricians. They soon fixed up their engines under the direction of M. Zimmermann, an engineer whose services the proprietors of the Louxor Hotel agreed to lend us. An inhabitant of the village of Gournah undertook for a fee to send us daily on donkey-back the necessary amount of water. The installation, begun at the end of December, 1901, was finished in March, 1902, and the trials were immediately declared to be satisfactory. The system has since been worked during the whole of the winter 1902–1903, to the advantage of the monuments and the delight of their visitors.

At first it seems as if nothing is changed in the

Valley. You have to look very closely to find two or three wooden poles which try to conceal themselves in a corner, and an almost invisible wire which passes from one to the other. Wherever possible, the wire was carried under the sand or close to the rock, and it is only at the last extremity, to cross the dip of the ravine, that it is actually visible in the air. The engine-house is so well hidden in its burrow where no one ever goes, that you are literally close upon it before either you see it or hear the noise. From time to time a louder blow of the piston resounds or a gust of wind blowing down the ravine brings a slight odour of petrol. But it is so slight that most tourists enter and stay in the tomb of Setouî I. without suspecting the existence of an engine only about fifteen yards off. All the royal tombs are preceded by a sort of vestibule open to the air, which is only the prolongation of the gallery of access. The greater part of the vestibule has been roofed in with wood and glass; the two ends have been closed by means of partitions provided with doors, and so the works have been constituted. Two or three mutilated cartouches remind us of the name of the first master, and his silhouette is vaguely sketched on one of the faces of the rock to the right. The engine roars away in the centre, a Crossley engine of seventeen horse-power nominal,

solid, squat, rugged, as is necessary in a part of the world so distant from engineering workshops where repairs can be made. The reservoirs and the table of distribution are relegated to the sides, and at the end through a half-open door may be seen the little room in which the electrician lives for six months in the year. Nothing is more significant than this association between the ancient building and modern machinery, the Solar disk, the outlines of which may be seen above the Pharaonic bay, and the engines of steel and copper which move and work almost noiselessly with that air of easy and conscientious application which characterises our most complicated inventions. Too often the modern world destroys the ancient in order to take its place: in this case the modern world respects the ancient and helps it to carry on what life it still possesses. The works actually distribute the light to six tombs, but we only use it for three at a time, and most often we arrange to have visitors only in two of them at once. Thanks to the care and skill of M. Zimmermann, there has been no accident so far. We have provided for the case of sudden failure or interruption of the current, and have stored lanterns and candles in each tomb, but have not had occasion to use them.

The six tombs selected for the first trial were

those of Amenôthes II., Ramses I., Setouî I., Ramses III., Ramses V., and Ramses IX., tombs which have always attracted the attention of travellers. Having descended the worn and slippery staircase which leads to Setouî I., a line of lamps is seen on the ceiling of the sloping gallery which seems to penetrate far into the earth, and as daylight is left behind we are struck by the clearness with which the smallest details of the paintings on the wall stand out. In the places where the sculptor, stopped in his work by the death of the sovereign, has left whole panels of inscriptions and figures, some merely sketched in red chalk, others half raised from the stone, all the technique of the design and of the execution was clearly perceived: the sketches of the workman, the corrections of the designer-in-chief, the attack of the graving tool on the surface, the restraint and modelling of the figures and the hieroglyphics, all the details of interest to the artist or to the historian of art stand out clearly in the new light. And as it is more and more used, gods and monsters who were almost invisible in the dim light of candles or the smoky coruscations of magnesium wire, present a firmness of outline and intensity of life that quite transforms them. Every moment there stand out faces of kings, profiles of animals, masks of wild genii, silhouettes

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of goddesses of which until now no one has been able to admire the delicate and graceful charm. It is especially in the Hall of the Sarcophagus, the one called by the Egyptians the Hall of Gold, that the advantages of the electric light appear. With its large dimensions, the height of the vaulted roof, the thickness of the pillars, who could boast of ever having seen the whole of it? The most favoured saw a few portions, half-blinded by the light of the magnesium wire, and by the kind of twilight that followed when the light was exhausted. They had to be content with imagining what it would be like if it was shown them with sufficient light, but even so, they could scarcely form any adequate idea of it. Now the lamps are so distributed and their light so graduated that there is an even brilliance everywhere, from the ground to the vaulted roof. It is no more necessary to make a lengthy examination of each picture, nor to make a great effort to keep the hues and tonality in one's eye, and then by a still greater effort of memory, of which few are capable, to co-ordinate isolated impressions, and to deduce from them an impression of the whole. The impression of the whole is now there from the very first, and it is a great delight to seize at once the richness, the colours, and the perfect equilibrium of the composition. No sooner is the light switched on than the decoration starts

to life before the spectator, and is as clear as possible.

And yet, I sometimes ask myself if these tombs, now so brilliantly illuminated, may not lose some small part of their attractiveness. The Egyptians certainly did not conceive them thus, and never at any period of their history did they see them more distinctly than European travellers saw them half a century ago, before the use of magnesium wire. The threshold crossed and the door closed, the visitors seemed to have bade an eternal farewell to daylight. Darkness engulfed them, all the more visible for the feeble reddish halo made by their torches. Under that inconstant and short-lived light the walls and their paintings were almost invisible: the figures of gods and the inscriptions emerged imperfectly from the darkness, and plunged into it again as soon as the procession had passed. We advanced as in a dream, haunted by mysterious forms, and in fact the hypogeum was no longer a part of our world. It had been dug out in resemblance of the deep valleys that the sun passed over each evening, and where the souls not vowed to Osiris sojourned in melancholy. On the walls was painted or carved the course of the Star through the crowds of grieving spirits or savage genii, his escort of magician gods, the portrait of the enemies he fought and of the friends

who helped him to defeat those enemies, the incantations he must recite in order to come triumphant out of his trial. For the moderns as for the ancients, a descent into the ill-lighted tomb of Setouî was a dim image of a journey in the regions of the dead. Does not the introduction of light then destroy the effect calculated by the Egyptians? The tourists who are acquainted with the destiny of the Pharaohs will perhaps miss the sensation of religious awe they expected, but how few of those come each year! The crowd whose chief desire is to see the things of which they have heard, and not merely to guess at them, has no such scruples. The visit is made easier by the use of electricity, and they are delighted. Besides, things are so arranged that each, if he so wishes, can instantly be brought back into the ancient conditions. In the tomb of Amenôthes II., for instance, where the mummy is still in its place in the sarcophagus, one of the funeral ceremonies is rehearsed. At a given signal the lights are switched off except one above the head of the sovereign. It is what the priests called the *Illumination of the Face:* they threw the flame of their lamps on to the face of the mummy to assure him of the enjoyment of eternal light. After a few minutes the guide switches on the other lights all at once, or one after the other, as may be

preferred. Thus the effect may be varied, and the tomb shown under its former aspect before seeing it under the new conditions. The six tombs are all similarly arranged, and our system has at least the advantage of contenting everybody. Those who desire to know the decoration in detail and to see it clearly, can command floods of light without risk or damage to the monument. Subtler minds can command semi-obscurity, and enjoy the illusion of a visit to the gods of the Egyptian Hades.

XVIII

AN ARAB TALE

When Ramses had fought for sixteen years against the Hittites and had concluded a treaty of peace and friendship with them, which at last left him lord of Canaan, he felt so proud and happy that he engraved the text in large hieroglyphics on the monuments, wherever he found a blank wall. The first specimen of this is at Karnak in the large sanctuary on the right bank, and a second on one of the pylons of the Ramesseum on the left bank. While freeing the pedestal of the gigantic colossus which encumbered the adjoining court with its débris, I had the good fortune a few days ago to discover a third one. It is, indeed, a very mutilated inscription, of which only four or five lines at most are legible; but in archæology nothing should be neglected, and I settled down to copy it. Three fat lizards and a small adder, which were basking in the sun, gave place to me, hissing incessantly and furious at being disturbed; with the remains of the wall

8 inches in front of me and enormous blocks of granite 12 inches behind me, I was in a kind of deep funnel, in which I was entirely hidden, and a regiment of tourists could have passed by without suspecting that there was any one amongst the ruins. I was fully occupied in wondering whether a bird, the tail of which only was distinguishable, had been an eagle or a screech-owl in better days, when voices rose from the other side of the wall where two of the temple guards, my donkey-boy and three friends who had joined him on the way there, were lying in the shade and talking freely, unconscious of my close proximity. As they were discussing local affairs of no interest to me, I only listened abstractedly; but soon, after some whisperings that became more and more indistinct, one of them coughed loudly, and I understood from the tone that he was going to relate a story.

It began, as usual, with the mention of a nameless Sultan, very powerful and very rich, who had reigned of old, long ages before, and who used to live in the Temple of Louxor. Not far from his castle there lived a poor man, a linen and cotton merchant, who scarcely earned sufficient on which to live. His house consisted of only one room and a small yard, in the corner of which grew a fig-tree. When the tree bore figs he ate two each day with his bread, and when the figs were over he ate his

bread dry and praised God, for he was very pious and possessed all the virtues. One winter afternoon, on returning home when his work was done to offer up a prayer, he noticed that his fig-tree had suddenly put forth ten of the most beautiful figs in the world; one of them was round, large, red, and on the verge of falling if it was not gathered, and the others were of various degrees of ripeness. His first act was to thank God who had performed this miracle for him; but instead of gathering and feasting on the ripe fig, he went at once to consult his neighbour the *rammâl*, who read the future in sand. The *rammâl* took his box of sand, traced some lines therein, jotted down some calculations, muttered a rune, and read the oracle: "Every day for ten days you must take one of your figs to the Sultan. On the tenth day your destiny will be fulfilled, and the good and the wicked will each find their proper place."

The Sultan of Louxor, like all self-respecting Sultans, used to give audience every morning, starting at sunrise. He sat outside the first court, between two obelisks, and patiently listened to the grievances or petitions of his subjects. The interview sometimes ended with a gift, sometimes with a benevolent thrashing administered by the officers of the army with elegance and speed. At a quarter to twelve the good prince broke up the sitting and

returned to the palace, convinced that he had not wasted his morning. The merchant had waited since dawn in the court, with his beautiful fig lying on a china plate between two embroidered napkins. When his turn came he prostrated himself at the foot of the throne, and presented the plate to the sovereign, saying that God had favoured him by sending him out of season ten magnificent figs, of such wonderful size and perfume that they were evidently not intended for an ordinary subject; he had ventured to bring the first, and if the Sultan consented he would come every morning to offer him one or other as they ripened. The Sultan highly approved of the sentiment of propriety revealed by this proceeding. He even deigned to eat the fig, and, having found it to his taste, commanded his vizier, who stood behind, to give the man a cloak of honour and a hundred English guineas. The poor man went home in the highest of spirits; he immediately bought himself a rifle, a watch, and a white donkey, and invited his neighbours to a splendid feast, where twenty dishes of stew, forty plates of sweets, and numberless iced drinks were served up.

"And wine, too?" asked the donkey-boy.

"Yes; wine like that on Cook's ships—white wine which froths and makes a noise when the bottle is uncorked."

"Allah! Allah!" responded the three guards in chorus. "How fortunate is he who can have such drinks!"

The next day the second fig arrived, and the third fig on the day following, until only three were left on the tree. Each time the gift was more valuable—slaves, camels, lands, gold and silver coins—so that the vizier grew jealous. "Great God!" he said to himself; "if I don't take care the Sultan may cast me off and install this plotter in my place." So he went secretly by night and paid the poor man a visit. After the customary compliments he said, "The Sultan talks of you unceasingly, and he even thinks of giving you his daughter in marriage, but one thing disturbs him and holds him back. You evidently eat a quantity of garlic, and he greatly dislikes the smell. You would do well, therefore, to appear at the audience with a piece of white linen over your mouth; he will be pleased with the attention, and you will be rewarded for it as you deserve." So the poor man presented himself all muffled in muslin. When he was going away the Sultan asked the vizier what this masquerade meant. "I do not know," replied the latter; "but if it please your Majesty I will find out." He hastened away, and returning with a very long face, could not be induced to speak for quite a long time. However,

as the Sultan grew impatient, and as his beard began to bristle, the vizier prostrated himself and murmured in his softest voice, "Your Majesty must deign to remember that you have to do with a poor unfortunate man, a fellah, a clown in whom good manners are not to be expected. He seems very grateful for the kindness with which your Majesty has loaded him, but he tells me quite frankly that your Majesty's breath is the worst that can be imagined, and that he feels ready to faint each time you deign to interview him. Thanks to the linen which he had wrapped round his nose and mouth, he has been able to endure to-day's conversation without too much discomfort." "Is that so?" said the king, "and does this strange man dislike our odour?" And he was fast becoming enraged, when suddenly he burst out laughing. "It does not matter," he said; "I don't want to be in his debt, and if he comes again to honour me with his figs I will make him a gift by the side of which all that he has received before will count as nothing." The vizier went home much disturbed, and not too sure that he had not increased the man's favour while hoping to lessen it. Next day the merchant reappeared as on the day before, half swathed in muslin. The Sultan looked at him for a minute, and then asked for pen, ink, and paper.

He wrote a note, sealed it, and gave it with his own seal to the man, telling him to go to the Treasury very early next morning. He was to deliver the note and seal to the chief treasurer, and would certainly not regret his trouble. When the audience closed, the vizier joined the man and congratulated him, but, he added, "His Majesty is so pleased with you that he wishes to spare you the slightest trouble. This note is a command to give a thousand pounds to the bearer of the seal. Here are the thousand pounds correctly counted out; give me the seal and the letter, which are useless to you." As soon as he had them in his hand the vizier never doubted that his fortune was made. He scarcely slept that night, so great was his impatience, and dawn found him at the door of the Treasury. The treasurer read the note, kissed the seal reverently, and raised one finger; two soldiers of the guard seized the vizier and cut off his head before he had time to realise what had happened to him.

However, the audience began, and the man with the figs was standing in his usual place, the plate in his hand and the cloth round his mouth. The Sultan, who could not believe his eyes, rubbed them vigorously, but the man was still there. He turned round to point him out to the vizier,

but the vizier was not there. The same minute the treasurer entered with a leather bag in his hand. On seeing him the Sultan said, "Why did you not behead the man I sent to you?" "Pardon me, your Majesty, I put him to death as you commanded. Besides, here is the head." And he placed the vizier's head in front of the throne. "What," cried the Sultan, "have you killed my minister?" "Sire," replied the treasurer, "did not your Majesty command me to behead on the spot the person who brought me the note and the royal seal?" "Doubtless, but it was not the vizier who was to bring them." "All the same, it was he who brought them."

As this in no way enlightened the Sultan, he decided to send for the poor man, and commanded him on pain of death to relate all that had happened. Then the latter explained how the vizier had advised him to tie up his mouth and for what reason, and how he had pocketed the thousand guineas in exchange for the note and the seal. In his astonishment at the adventure, the Sultan praised God. "This vizier," said he, "was a wicked man, but all's well that ends well. He stole your place and paid for it with his own head; take his place in your turn and be my vizier." The merchant bowed his head to the dust, and prostrating himself

repeated, "The *rammâl* was right, blesséd be the *rammâl!*" "And what had the *rammâl* to do with this affair?" "Sire, when I consulted him, did he not announce to me that on the tenth day the good and the wicked would each find his proper place? And now to-day is the tenth day: the vizier is dead, and I am in the vizier's place!"

One story follows another, and the narrator had already made a fresh start when some one called me. I had to answer and betray my hiding-place. My fellahs, in consternation at learning I was so close, fled noiselessly, and I went on with the study of the tail of my bird. The Egyptians dislike showing themselves to Europeans as they really are, and we might live among them for years without realising that with a little dexterity we might succeed in drawing from them matter for a whole new volume of the "Arabian Nights." A little donkey driver from Gournah, to whom I told a well-arranged version of the "Peau d'Ane" between the temple of Setouî and the Bab-el-Molouk, gratified me in return with a half a dozen stories, partly satirical, partly sentimental, which left a charming impression on me. Would they please others as well as myself? I threaded my way through the flowering beans at the gentle

pace of which the donkeys are very fond when they have not been spoiled by tourists' eccentricities; and as my day's work was finished, I abandoned myself to the pleasure of idly listening to my companion. He chanted his stories in a guttural voice as he ambled at my side, and his breathless sentences, the laugh interrupting them at the humorous points, his perpetual repetitions of formulas and words, gave a singular savour to what he said. This is assuredly the way in which the talkative donkey-boys of the times of Ramses told the "Tale of the Two Brothers" or that of "The Predestined Prince" to travellers. Evidently the story owed half its interest to its surroundings, and I fear that in taking it out of its setting it may have lost the best of its flavour and colour.

XIX

THE OPENING OF A NEW ROYAL TOMB AT THEBES

Mr. Theodore Davis, an American who spends his winters in Egypt, provided the money; the Service des Antiquités helped to conduct the excavations, and thus aiding each other, discovered one of the rare royal hypogeums which remain to be found at Bibân el-Molouk in the valley where the Theban Pharaohs formerly reposed. The quest was neither long nor fatiguing. On the 18th of January last year,[1] after carefully examining the ground with Mr. Carter, the inspector-in-chief of the Saîd, it had seemed to me that the steep ravine in which M. Loret found in 1899 the intact hypogeum of a prince Maiharpiriou, ought to contain some other tomb. A workshop was set up there, and attacking it from the bottom we went slowly up the slope, exploring everything on the way. Mr.

[1] This was written in February, 1903.

Carter first found objects that had belonged to Maiharpiriou, fragments of variegated glass, clippings of cut cornelian, pieces of a chest with the name Amenôthes III., and last, in a wooden box, two corselets in cut leather in astonishing preservation. A little higher up the name of Thoutmôsis IV. began to come out of the earth, and a piece of limestone was picked up on which the portrait of the Pharaoh was sketched in black ink, as well as pieces of an alabaster vase in which his cartouches could be discerned. We could no longer doubt that he was buried near there in some cavity of the ground. But the mass of rubbish was so enormous that when Mr. Davis, leaving Louxor in March, asked that operations might be suspended, we had not reached the entrance. It was only on the 17th of January last that the reis Mohammed, having come to the beginning of the ravine, saw the door in the rock at the foot of the cliff. Mr. Carter immediately came and climbed into the chamber of the sarcophagus amid the rubbish. The mummy had been in the Museum for three years, but the equipment with which it was provided on the day of the funeral was scattered over the ground in the same places where the thieves had thrown it after despoiling the mummy. Mr. Carter rapidly surveyed the condition of the place, then

barricaded the door afresh, and we telegraphed to Mr. Davis to come back from Assouân, which he was visiting at the moment.

On February 3rd, in the morning, all those who had a right to be present at the opening were assembled at Bibân el-Molouk, Mr. Davis and his family, Mr. Carter, M. Legrain, and M. Baraize, of the Service des Antiquités, a few Egyptologists visiting Thebes, Mr. Newberry, Mr. Tytus, M. de Bissing, and M. de Lacau. Thoutmôsis IV. had set up his House of Eternity in one of the wildest recesses of the valley. It was a projection of the rock, forming a cornice half-way up the side, and hardly accessible through a slope of rubbish. He had smoothed it by the use of the pickaxe, and had formed an irregular platform on which fifty persons could easily move about. Free on the north and west, at the east and south it is fixed to the resisting rock, which rises almost perpendicularly to a height of 60 feet. A trench dug out in the ground towards the south descends in a rapid incline, and penetrates under a doorway barred with rubbish. Beyond, the corridor is lost in the darkness, and the figures of the workmen are confused. They have been labouring since dawn to clear the approaches to the first chamber. The baskets of sand pass swiftly from hand to hand and are emptied outside, while the electricians of the

Service, after fixing a provisory wire to our workshop, await, lamps in hand, the signal for departure. It is not yet a question of entirely excavating the hypogeum, and the road we follow is only a narrow passage wide enough to admit a renewal of air and the explorer. The roof is low, the incline steep and slippery, and the débris of which it is formed glide away beneath the feet. A thick rope has been stretched along the corridors, held up at intervals by strong workmen, which can be grasped by the hands of those unaccustomed to these descents into Hades. After a few yards daylight vanishes, the electric lamps are lighted, the corridor plunges obliquely into the rock, rough, bare, blackened here and there by the smoke of the old torches. At a depth of about thirty yards it kept level for a little and then was suddenly interrupted. A square chasm about four yards broad and ten deep yawned darkly at our feet. It served two ends: first it barred the way to thieves, and then in times of storm, if by chance the water forced its way through the barrier of sand that stopped up the entrance, it would be kept there and would thus be prevented from penetrating into the chamber where the mummy slept. The chasm proved itself more effectual against water than against men, for thieves in ancient times had crossed it by beams thrown over it, and we

followed their example. A footbridge constructed a few days before took us safely to the other side. Yellow stars on dark-blue ground were scattered over the ceiling; near the top of the walls were scenes of adoration which deserved careful study, but we scarcely looked at them, so eager were we to reach the centre of the place, and it was almost in a run that we entered the first chamber.

It fits into the right corner of the prolongation of the corridor, and runs from east to west. It is as if crushed down under a low ceiling supported by two squat pillars retained in the mass on the great axis, and the walls have remained rough. The tomb is in this palace of the dead king, the equivalent of the Hall of Columns in the Palace of Thebes where the living king gave audience to his subjects. In the north-east corner a badly quarried staircase is cut in the rock, and comes out at the end of about twenty yards in a room longer than it is broad, which serves as a sort of ante-chamber to the funeral vault. It is covered with very fine paintings as far as can be judged from the interstices left by the heaps of sand or pebbles that lean up against the walls and partly hide them. A hasty glance shows the usual scenes: the dead man worshipping before the gods of the West and presenting his offerings with his prayers, or clasped in the arms of goddesses, drinking at their breasts the

milk that was to infuse life into his veins. A glance at the hieroglyphics and we are certain it has to do with Thoutmôsis IV. The cartouches traced by the side of him would bear witness to that fact if confirmation were needed. But is there not to be found among the commonplaces of mortuary imagery some inscription that will give us information regarding his history? And, indeed, there on the right wall are two fine hieratic inscriptions: two sgraffiti written in black ink in the empty space between two figures. It was a custom of the Pharaohs to instruct certain high functionaries to inspect the royal tombs at intervals to verify the state of the place and the condition of the mummies, to see if the linen wrappings were damaged or if the funerary equipment had suffered from men or from time. It often happened that these officers had to report sad discoveries. The brigands did not respect these dead royalties. Sometimes, with the complicity of their official guards, they had pulled them from their coffins, torn their wrappings, stolen their jewels, their royal insignia, their amulets, their valuable arms. It was then necessary reverently to pick up the dishonoured corpses, to robe them afresh, put them back in their sarcophagus, and replace the portions of their equipment that had been destroyed. The work accomplished, the functionaries withdrew,

but not before recording somewhere on a coffin lid a circumstantial account of the proceedings.

All such inscriptions that we have belong to the period of the later Ramses or the high priests of Amon, and here the new inscriptions are conceived in the most correct hieratic of the XVIIIth Dynasty. Would the robbery of the hypogeum have begun almost directly after the burial? The principal sgraffite tells us in its eight lines that in the year VIII. of this Armais, who was the last Pharaoh of the XVIIIth Dynasty or the first of the XIXth, "the fourth month of Shaît, his divine Majesty ordered that Maîya, son of Waî and his lady Ouêrît, the fan-bearer on the right of the king, a royal scribe, superintendent of the treasure, head of the works of the necropolis, leader of the festival of Theban Amon-râ, be commissioned to repair the mummy of the king Thoutmôsis IV. in his august dwelling which is on the West of Thebes." The shortest sgraffite has preserved the name of "his secretary, the governor of the town and lord Thoutmôsis, son of Hâtaî and of his lady Souhak," he who with his own hand traced on the wall the brief account of the visit. It is therefore certain that a little less than a century after the burial it was necessary to restore the mummy of Thoutmôsis IV.

Had it already been violated and despoiled of

its treasures? The reign of Armais closes a period of religious revolutions and civil wars. We know now from one of his inscriptions that at his accession he found Egypt completely disorganised. The provinces were in arms one against the other, and the soldiers roved about the land in search of adventure, sacking villages and plundering travellers. It was to be feared that one of those bands would have rifled the royal necropolis, and to relieve the doubt Armais despatched Maîya and his agents to Bibân el-Molouk. But the terms of the document show that no one had touched the tomb of Thoutmôsis IV. It was merely needful to robe the mummy again, since its wrappings had decayed from age, and to replace the dried-up offerings by fresh offerings, and in so doing to borrow from the neighbouring tomb of Queen Hatshopsouîtou a few alabaster utensils in the name of the Pharaoh. The robbery took place later under the XXth Dynasty, and the damage was irreparable. The sarcophagus chamber into which we penetrated on leaving the antechamber seemed to us from the threshold entirely upset. It resembles that of Amenôthes II., oblong, low, narrow, divided by two rows of three pillars each into three naves of equal size. Towards the northern end the ground has been dug out for about 4 or 5 feet to form

a sort of rectangular alcove, reached by a staircase of five or six steps between the two last pillars. It is flanked by four cabinets, two on the right and two on the left. They represent the private apartments of the dead personage, the retreat in which he hid his mortal remains, and that his divine soul inhabited or left according to his desire during the ample leisure of life beyond the grave. The alcove being reserved for the sarcophagus and the mummy, the rest of the central apartment contained the most important portion of the funerary equipment and larder.

The side rooms served as a store-house for the remaining furniture and provisions or for vaults for the princes of the family who died young. It is probable that the little mummy placed in one of them is that of a prince, Amenemhaît, son of Thoutmôsis IV., to whom, had he lived, the crown would have reverted by right. The objects consecrated to the use of the dead during the funeral were neatly arranged on tables, or piled up on the bare ground against the walls or the pillars, as they had been formerly in the store-houses of the palace. The richness and elegance of most of them presented from the first a striking contrast to the rough and desolate aspect of the place that gave them shelter. Thoutmôsis IV. having in fact been

gathered to his fathers before his tomb was finished, the works had been immediately suspended. There was no inscription, no painting, no sketch, even no whitewash, in the mortuary chamber or its dependencies, and the last workman in departing had not swept up the filth which soiled the ground. The valuable stuffs, the furniture, arms, and provisions were mingled with fragments of stone broken off the ceiling and with pieces of broken tools. The thieves took away those things that had a value for them, gold, silver, jewels, fine plate. They turned everything else upside down, and reduced almost to powder what they did not care to carry off.

All this confused and disorderly débris formed so thick a litter that it was not possible to venture into it without running the risk of crushing the things by the dozen. Mr. Carter therefore made a path of planks on trestles about 8 inches above it, and which reached to the sarcophagus. That at least was intact. Like the sarcophagi of Amenôthes II. and of Thoutmôsis III., it is of white limestone but painted dark red to simulate the statuary sandstone. The exterior is adorned with the usual scenes, the two mystic eyes, the king worshipping before the funerary divinities, and the children of Horus. The lid has not been shattered by blows of the hammer nor roughly

thrown to the ground. It was carefully removed at the time of the theft, placed upside down in front of the basin, and the two ends propped up with two heifers' heads in painted wood to prevent the polished face from touching the rough ground. A heap of undistinguishable objects lie at the side, among which we vaguely perceive splintered *statues of double*, and figures of gods or animals in cedar-wood smeared with tar. In a corner on an unburnt brick stood a statuette, and the inscription on it informed us that it was entrusted with the protection of the mummy against the demons which haunt the tombs. "If you attack it, I shall attack you, and you will have to deal with me" was the substance of its remarks. It was placed there in accordance with the rules of the funeral ritual, and we wanted to search immediately for three similar ones which were hidden under the rubbish. Fragments of vases in coloured glass or painted pottery were scattered about in hundreds, and wherever the light fell there started out of the darkness an amulet, a *Respondent* in enamelled porcelain, an armful of dried leaves, a rag of fine linen, alabaster dishes and phials, necklaces of threaded pearls. In the midst of the disorder the eye was attracted by a blackish mass of unusual aspect, it was the body of a chariot that by some unknown happy chance

had remained whole and safe. The frame was of a light unpliable wood, skilfully twisted, covered with a double trimming of leather, ornamented with reliefs on both sides; in the front the sovereign inscribes the peoples of the north and those of the south; on the inside those tribes are represented and catalogued. It is in thin relief, touched up with a penknife with an extraordinary sureness of hand. In their *genre* the design and execution are as perfect as those of the greatly admired paintings of the trophy of Amenôthes III. in the Cairo Museum.[1] At first view it seems that the other pieces are there—the pole, the wheels, the harness for the horses, the quivers for the arrows, and the cases for the javelins—and that without undue trouble the whole could be restored.[2] If we had succeeded we should possess a specimen, unique in its kind, of the ceremonial chariot of a conqueror of the XVIIIth Dynasty, that on which he returned to Thebes after his victories, and which figured in his funeral procession when his mummy was carried to the House of Eternity. As he had used it in this

[1] The Stela trophy described in the "Guide to the Cairo Museum," 3rd edit., pp. 124–5.

[2] The hope has not been realised. The important parts were broken into so many pieces, and the pieces were so rotten, that we were unable to make the restoration.

world when, amid the acclamations of the populace, he repaired to the Temple of Amon, so he desired to enter the other world and to appear there as a conqueror in the midst of his fathers, the gods of the West.

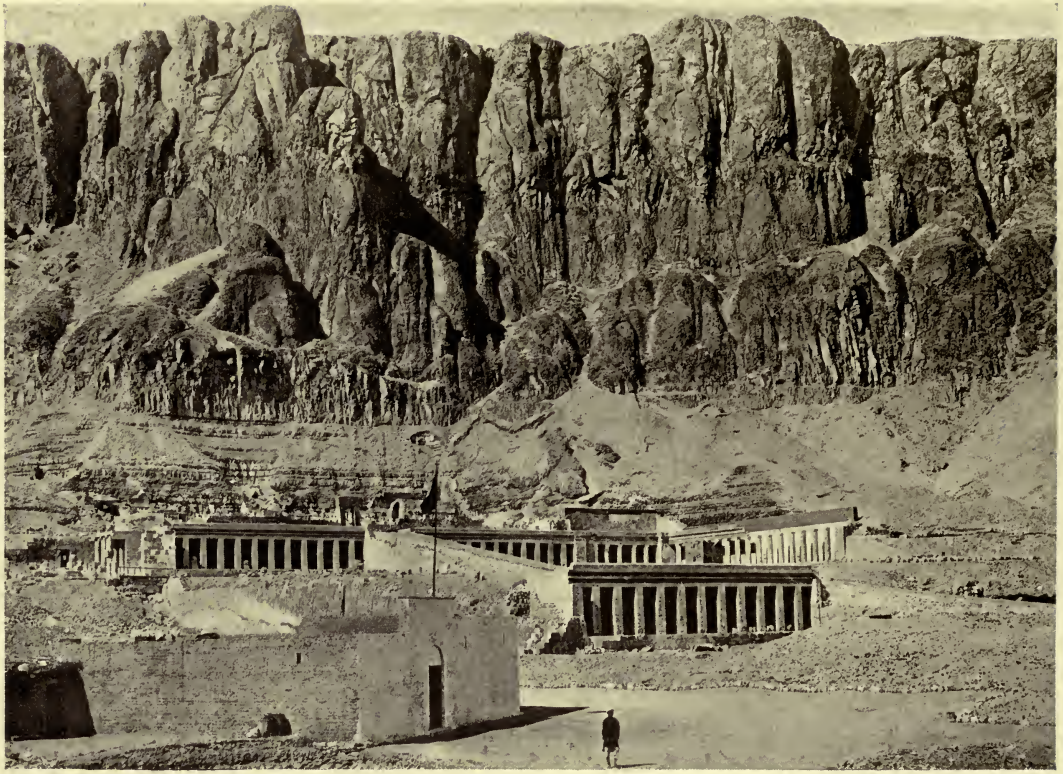
The presence of so much wealth stirs our emotions, and, the instincts of our vocation awaking, we are anxious to remove these débris without delay, to hold them in our hands and to examine them one by one to decipher the inscriptions, and solve the problems they offer. But we must resist the temptation. As soon as we depart, Mr. Carter will enter on the work, and will not rest until he has emptied the tomb. He will then draw the objects and send them to the Museum, where we shall try to match the pieces, and then to restore the objects. When that work is finished Mr. Davis, who provided the money for the excavation, will also provide the money for publication, and before long all will be able to study what the tomb contained at their ease. For the moment we have only to enjoy the wonderful sight before our eyes. The electric light does not penetrate the dusty, heavy air very well, and from the corner where I stood my companions looked like vague silhouettes. The dread of the tomb, so lately shut up, and whence the visits of tourists has not banished the impression of death, has invaded them

without their knowledge. They speak in whispers, moderate their gestures, walk or rather glide along as noiselessly as possible. Occasionally they stoop to pick up an object, or group themselves round a pillar, remaining motionless for a moment, then they resume their silent rounds, cross each other, join each other, and then separate again. Very rarely does some abrupt movement of one of them break the rhythm of their evolutions, or do they let fall some brief remark that sounds like a trumpet above their discreet whispers. The persons employed in the funeral and the priests must have so moved and spoken the evening of the ceremony when, the mummy sealed up in its sarcophagus, they hastened to perform the last rites by which the Pharaoh was shut into his mysterious chamber.

XX

WITH SCHWEINFURTH ON A VISIT TO THOT

In the outskirts of Thebes there are ruins of which tourists know nothing. And yet they would find those ruins attractive if they were not in a district so rich in more celebrated and better preserved monuments. Those which Schweinfurth discovered on the north of the Valley of the Kings may be reckoned among the most unknown. On the top of the cliff which dominates the village of Gamoleh is a group of small buildings in earth and unhewn stone. Was it a chapel or a popular oracle? or a rendezvous for sportsmen? or a police watch-house or station? The fragments of inscriptions found there are too mutilated to inform us. The style seems to be that of the Saîd epoch and to place them between the seventh and the sixth centuries B.C. However, there are other fragments which will perhaps afford information if we take the trouble to piece them together. We must have courage, and as Schweinfurth consents to act as guide, attempt the adventure. So



THE HILLS OF THEBES WITH THE TEMPLE OF DEÎR EL-BAHARI AT THEIR FOOT.

(The Temple of Thot is situated on a higher hill behind these cliffs.)

To face p. 218.

we set out on January 30th[1] through the sand-banks which separate the broad arm of the Nile from the western embankment, through the hamlet of Eyoub-Bey, where the smoke still rises from the morning fires, galloping along the dike of the Fadi-lieh canal side by side with a train of sugar-canes, among flocks of sheep making much dust on their way to market, through the fresh, smiling plain where the larks sing loudly, intoxicated with the perfume of the beans, by the Temple of Gournah, by the low sandhill against which it leans, by the shallows of the ouadiên, as if we were riding towards the Valley of the Kings. But instead of taking the usual road we bear to the right and reach the north by a path of gravel and sharp stones. To the left are quarries with the name Apries among the rocks, outlines of ancient hovels showing dirty grey against the yellow of the desert, trenches dug in the sand, and banks of pebbles left there by the waters of a past age, ridges of disintegrated rocks, rounded blocks, holes, indeed, all the effects of the work of torrents. A first declivity brings us out of this confusion, then a gently sloping terrace leads us to the foot of the cliff. We regretfully dismount and stable our donkeys in the shade of a rock where we shall find them on our descent.

[1] 1905.

The path was made, God knows in what distant epoch, by the footsteps of the few faithful who visited the god at long intervals. It follows a narrow ridge between two steep slopes, but is neither dangerous nor difficult. Two or three times only it suddenly becomes very steep for about twenty yards, and invites us to a sort of escalade. But if there is nothing about it to merit the attention of an Alpine Club, it is full of interest for geologists. The surface of the hill, through the erosive action of the sun, is exfoliated, laying bare in places quantities of fossils, among others enormous lucinæ in admirable preservation and cardium of the species to which Schweinfurth has given his name. Lumps of flint are together with the fossils, and among them flint implements of the most primitive type, many of which are as intact as when they came from the factory, while others have been used and repaired at different times. Long before our Egypt was born, beings lived there that Schweinfurth scarcely dares to call men. Stone provided them with exactly what redeemed them from the inferiority to which Nature condemned them in their relation to the big animals. The flint ring assisted somewhat the weakness of their arms in a hand-to-hand fight with the enemy. They tore off or split the skins of animals with their knives and scrapers, that their nails and teeth

would never have been strong enough to tear. Their dwelling-places are unknown to us, and their cemeteries, if they had them, are still undiscovered. Their flint implements are found everywhere, and after ages of oblivion are our surest guarantee of their existence. Schweinfurth told me this history as we ascended, and I did not cease questioning and listening, but those who have no experience in climbing will not find it easy to imagine that it is necessary to be young to talk science and to climb both at the same time. After fifty a man has only breath enough for one of those pleasures at a time, and the first steep bit closes the most interesting conversation. After ten minutes of panting silence we are at the end of our journey opposite the ruins I propose to examine.

Two piers of burnt bricks, the corners broken off, the tops cut off, excoriated, corroded by the wind of the desert, stood on a foundation of unhewn stones piled up without mortar or any sort of link; between them, where the door would formerly have been, and a little to the back, a glimpse was caught of low, slender walls on a heap of rubbish. The outer enclosure described a rectangle of about 20 yards by 18 yards, placed perpendicularly at the extremity of the plateau. It has fallen down in places, less through the action of men than through that of time, and

what remains of it is scarcely more than 9 feet in height. The central building, also of brick, is entirely isolated. It is divided into four compartments, a sort of vestibule that occupies the whole width and three chambers, or rather three contiguous niches, which open only into the vestibule. The plan does away with all doubt as to the signification of the whole. It is the same as that to be seen at Deîr el-Medineh, for instance, one common to most of the secondary temples of the Memphian age. The god inhabited the central niche, and left the others to the two divinities associated with him. To tell the truth, he was a poor god without any pretensions to the luxuries nor even to the ordinary comforts of life. The walls of his house were whitewashed like those of a fellah's dwelling, and neither paintings nor inscriptions were to be seen. It was then to be feared that we should never discover who he was. However, the bricks of one of the doors had been framed with limestone posts, and the pieces seen to be scattered among the bricks would perhaps compensate us for the silence of the walls. I set the four men I had brought with me to work among the rubbish, and leaving them under the surveillance of the inspector of Gournah, I set out to examine the plateau. About forty yards towards the north-west foundations of burnt

bricks mark the place of a building now destroyed. The arrangement of the levellings shows that it could not have been a chapel, but a dwelling-house or a mere warehouse. Two or three Europeans would have felt terribly crowded in the space, but it might easily have sheltered ten natives. The guardians of the god would have dwelt there with their family, and an oblong pit hollowed out near by was perhaps the tank where they stored the water they brought up from the plain for household needs and for those of the religious ceremonies.

From the tank the plateau slopes to the west and north, at first gently and then more steeply. It is strewn with rough flints, among which may be distinguished cut flints of a kind similar to those on the other slope, but very few in number. It has not been inhabited since the beginnings of history. The officiating priests of the temple may have installed themselves there while the worship lasted; now scarcely a few sportsmen or smugglers visit it at rare intervals. The slope, after hesitating for an instant what direction to take, suddenly turns obliquely to the east, and soon runs against the flank of the neighbouring cliff. At the angle where they met there unexpectedly appeared a corner of the valley, a patch of verdure, a piece of river glittering in the sun, a village, a portion of the Arabian desert, a spur of hill

outlined in pink against the liquid gold of the horizon. It looked as if we need only go comfortably on to reach the plain, but as I went forward Schweinfurth caught hold of my arm. I was without suspecting it on the edge of a precipice; the ground slipped away almost under my feet, and from here to the bottom it would be a fall of at least 100 yards. Two or three times a year a violent storm precipitates the cataracts of heaven upon the plateau. The water, rolling down in raging sheets, leaps into the empty space. For an hour or two a foaming, turbid cataract bounds over the lower projections of the hill, gushes out with a great noise, and is lost in the moraine before reaching the borders of the cultivated regions. As soon as the downpour ceases the stream diminishes and is reduced to a mere thread of water, which soon dries up. For two or three days a little dampness remains on the surface and tufts of verdure spring forth at hazard, but they soon wither and with them the last traces of the storm are effaced. In the season at which I visited it only the vegetation usual in the desert was to be seen there, patches thinly sown with reddish plants with fibrous stalks and brittle bearded roots. Agile beetles rush off as we approach. Here and there a big tawny lizard, disturbed by the sound of our footsteps, lifts its

pointed head and flees as fast as its four feet can carry it, tearing up the gravel as it goes. About the middle of the hillside two butterflies, that for no reason we can conceive had come up from the plain, fly round us for a moment, and a marauding crow with a short, sharp cry escaped from the hollow in which it had been concealed. The silence is so intense that we hear the sound of its wings dying away in the distance long after the bird has disappeared over the side of the hill.

The excavation did not produce what we expected, but it was not altogether unfruitful, and the inspector spread out before us with a smile of satisfaction about sixty pieces of limestone bearing characters or pictures. The greater part seemed to belong to one of the doors and taught us nothing of value, but others presented some significant facts. There must have been at least two tabernacles there, two naos of different dimensions, the doorposts of which were thus decorated on the outer surface. On one of the fragments may be recognised a piece of a king who stretches forth his hands in prayer towards an absent divinity, and on another the damaged outline of the winged disk which formed the ornament of the cornice. Farther on I copied a few words of an unimportant hymn and what remained of a royal protocol. The two cartouches

are mutilated, but the final sign of the second is still legible; it is that which ends the name of Nechao, the son of Psammetichus I., the most powerful of the Saîd sovereigns. The conclusions that I had drawn from the few fragments collected by Schweinfurth seemed to be confirmed, and to be accurate. The temple was built or restored in the last years of the seventh or in the first years of the sixth century B.C.,[1] but who was the god? There he is himself, or rather there are the pieces of two of his statues—feet, hands, a thigh, portions of limbs still more decisive: he was Thot, the master of magic and letters, the god who was the scribe and the magician of the gods in the guise of a baboon crouching sanctimoniously, head up, hands on knees. To judge by the hands, the largest of the statues cannot have been more than 2 feet in height, and the other would have been a fourth less. According to custom they stood on a rectangular pedestal, bevelled in front and provided with a staircase which reached the feet of

[1] M. Sethe places the building of the temple in the XIIth Dynasty, and thinks that the king was Amenemhaît IV. Mr. Petrie, on the contrary, attributes it to the king Sankharâ Montouhotpou of the XIth Dynasty. The resemblance in style between the monuments of the first Theban epoch and those of the Saîd is so great that it is easy to be mistaken.

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the idol. Wreckage from the sacred equipment stood out among the relics, the lid of an alabaster vase, jars of red and grey pottery, fragments of dishes and vessels in blackish earth, even the body of one of those hawks in painted wood which surmount caskets for oils and perfumes. The name of a certain Kamôsis is scratched in big running hand on a fragment of limestone ; it is the souvenir of some pilgrim who came to consult the oracle. An inscription in an undecipherable writing fills a corner of a yellowish block that lies in front of the door. I order it to be detached and sent to Cairo; perhaps some scholar passing through will succeed in reading it and will inform us of the contents.

Possibly by scraping and turning over the bricks we might discover more documents; they would doubtless add little to those we have gathered. The temple was too far from the beaten track to attract many worshippers. It would only have been frequented by the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages, and I am inclined to think it had no resident clergy. The priests went up on the eve of festivals to celebrate the sacrifice, and for the rest of the time it was left to the care of two or three sacristans. The day was drawing in, the descent was fatiguing for a man who soon gets out of breath, the way is long, so I order the excavations to stop, and before

departing pause for a moment at the entrance of the enclosure to enjoy the view spread out before our eyes. To the south extends the Theban cliff with its terraces upheld by walls of rock, the bottom of which rests in heaps of rubbish. It is cut into capricious valleys, and the last, that which is dominated by a pyramidal summit, is the Valley of the Kings. Two or three patches which stand out in black on the warm paleness of the whole mark the entrance to the tombs. The line of dark points moving above, almost on the crest, is a caravan of tourists going to Deîr el-Bahari. Before us, as far as we could see, spread the pale green fields of Egypt, its winding Nile, its villages with the smoke of the evening fires, and the three Theban peaks, lilac and pink in colour, retire in gradation towards the south. Other summits farther off shine between them in line, one behind the other. It is the usual landscape with its charm of wealth and melancholy sweetness; but what gives it to-day a strange character is the Dutch sky which hovers over it. Immense white clouds, edged with black and scarlet, drag heavily along and make strong shadows on the ground. A stiff north breeze sweeps the slope and brings us a vague odour of vegetation and warm earth from below.

XXI

A NEW PHARAOH

THE Pharaohs are inexhaustible: it is vain to register them by the dozen, new ones are always presenting themselves. When it concerns the early dynasties there is nothing surprising in this, and years will pass before we shall possess the complete list of those who ruled Egypt in its beginnings. But we are naturally astonished when the newcomer belongs to less remote epochs; for instance, to those the history of which is to be read in the Greek and Roman writers—epochs which we imagine to be sufficiently known to us. However, here is a prince with a classical name, a Psammetichus, son of Nêith, who is resuscitated in the Saîd amidst the ruins of Asfoun, and who unexpectedly claims a place in the world.

Asfoun is invisible from the Nile, so well is it hidden by the sugar refinery of Matâanah and by the avenues of lebakhs that adorn the embankment. The houses of native or European employees the post-office, the outhouses, the buildings and

chimneys of the factory, form a neat frontage along the river, behind which a little Arab village is easily concealed. Just at first it is merely the usual scene of Egyptian life—a dozen brick buildings, the courtyard walls of mud, heaps of filth and rubbish, an undefined yard where hens peck and children play ; but beyond that there suddenly appeared in a space of verdure a piece of an almost French landscape, a little grass, a bit of meadow, newly mown fields covered with stubble, tufts of sonts and lebakhs joined by screens of thorny shrubs, and flowing beneath their branches a full stream, as on the borders of some French wood. It flows swiftly on the left with the pleasant sound of running water, so rare in Egypt and which European ears so greatly miss. It plunges into the thickets, reappears, then plunges again into the shade, and is always heard chattering and babbling, raising its voice if it meets an obstacle, or lowering it till it is no more than a slight murmur. It must not be too curiously observed, nor should we ask whence it comes, for we should then discover that its bed was of cement and that it took its rise in the cylinders of the steam-pump that pants below.

It is an irrigating canal that poses as a capricious nymph in order to console itself for prosaically watering the cultivated lands, but

which is filled and emptied at fixed hours according to the pleasure of the engineer. The impression of Europe lasts for scarcely a hundred yards. When we have crossed the stream the thickets open out, and the country resumes its African aspect. The road, or rather the railway line that does duty for a road, runs first between sugar-cane or cotton plantations that have just been cut, then between patches of corn where the stalks spring up thick and strong. A line of acacias and tamarisks, frequently broken, edges the embankment of a canal, and above their tops a ridge of hills is visible, black and yellow against the horizon.

Asfoun is perhaps the dirtiest village that I have seen in Upper Egypt. It lies on the other side of the canal, perched on a hill of rubbish that the *sebakh* hunters have devastated in every sense. An untidy cemetery renders the approach dismal; the tombs are roughly indicated by a heap of stones or by piles of broken bricks, and are crowded round two or three half-demolished koubbehs, and almost touch the first houses of the living. We find dark winding alleys, mud walls, much rubbed by the passers-by, one-storied buildings with frowning doors and no outside windows, infected dung-heaps in every corner, streams of liquid manure and filth in which our donkeys walk

knee-deep. Poverty should be at its height here, judging solely by the dirt, but the population does not seem to be of the poorest. Turkeys, chickens, and pigeons abound, goats wander about in quest of stray straw, a few buffaloes ruminate comfortably across the roadway, and a flock of geese, disturbed in their promenade by our approach, scatter before us, uttering shrill cries. At the noise children appear from every corner, but they have not been spoiled by contact with tourists, and merely give us an astonished glance without asking for bakhshîsch.

The spot where the new king awaits us is almost in the centre of the village, in a small, irregular, slanting square on the southern slope of the hill. The principal mosque occupies the south-east corner. The walls have been lately repaired and preserve nothing of their primitive decoration, if indeed they ever were decorated, but the minaret is of good style, despite the restorations it has undergone. A cylinder topped by a polygon-shaped lantern and its cupola stands upon a rectangular tower finished off by a cornice in the old Egyptian style. The whole building is of poor bricks, with transverse wooden beams at intervals to bind together and regulate the masonry. I asked an old man if there was any commemorative inscription, and he remembered

seeing in his youth a marble tablet above the door covered with worn Cufic characters. Perhaps it contained the name of the founder and the date of its construction, but it fell down during the last restorations, and the man did not know where it had been put: he had something better to do than to worry himself about what became of inscribed stones. Opposite the minaret, at the bottom of the square, the ruins of a temple are scattered over the ground, two courses of masonry, about 3 feet in height, in dull sandstone. They run from east to west for about 12 feet; the two ends are destroyed, but the faces of the existing portions are well preserved. There is to be seen there the bottom of two pictures placed symmetrically back to back, which contain a king worshipping before a seated god, a goddess standing behind him. Their heads are wanting, as well as the inscriptions which surrounded them, but a line of hieroglyphics engraved horizontally close to the bottom tells us that the king, Psammetichus Manakhprê, son of Nêith, built the temple in good white, solid stone for all eternity.

When we began our examination, the square was almost deserted, but the news of our arrival spread through the village, and we had scarcely been at work ten minutes when half the population came quietly running up to watch

our operations. There were about two hundred men and women of all ages, either crouching or standing round us in three or four rows, silent, and attentively observing our slightest movements. Ideas about treasure pass through their heads, and they firmly believe that the place we are excavating is enchanted ground, *ard marsoud.* If I cared to pronounce the magic words, the blocks would change into ingots of gold, or the slabs of the flooring would split open and reveal heaps of diamonds and rubies. They would laugh in our faces if we explained to them that we were taking all this trouble to clear up an historical fact. The stones, however, belonged to the back wall of a chapel similar to those that the priestesses of Amon built at Thebes. If the side walls still exist, we ought to look for them in a southerly direction in the centre of the square. The mosque was probably built on the ruins of the principal temple. If we made excavations we should doubtless find something that would give us information about the founder of the chapel. None of the three Psammetichus of the XXVIth Dynasty added Manakhprê, the royal prænomen of Thoutmôsis III., to their family name. We should then have here a fourth Psammetichus, perhaps the one who flourished in 400 B.C. and took advantage of the revolt of the younger Cyrus

to make himself independent of the Persians. But many details in the technique of the sculptures and the inscription prevent us from accepting that interpretation. First, the style is not that of the Saîd schools. The cutting of the hieroglyphics is awkward, the contour of the figures is stiff, the relief lacks delicacy. A study of the detail shows us all the characteristics of the Ptolemaic age and of the last rather than of the first Ptolemies. We shall then have disinterred here one of the ephemeral Pharaohs who arise in the Thebaïd in troublous times, and who attempt to oppose the rule of the foreigner with a native Dynasty.

We are, of course, free to imagine this; but the composition of the royal protocol suggests a very different hypothesis to me. Our personage is not named Psammetichou-si-Nêith—Psammetichus, son of Nêith—as I have hitherto stated. By the place he occupies, as well as by the title that precedes him, Psammatikou-si-Nêith is a prænomen and Manakhprê the real name. Now if Manakhprê, the prænomen of Thoutmôsis III., could become the name of a high priest of the XXIst Dynasty without shocking Egyptian customs, there is nothing in the name Psammatikou, a word of Libyan origin borne by several members of the XXVIth Dynasty, that fits it for regularly

serving as a prænomen. A Pharaoh with the prænomen Psammetichus is a monster, and its presence alone in inscriptions is enough to cast suspicion on them. To speak the truth, he never existed, but was the invention of an ignorant scribe. When the Ptolemies restored the ancient monuments they often attempted to set them up again as they were originally. They repainted the primitive pictures in the name of the kings of the past, and those parts of the Theban temples on which the names of Thoutmôsis or of Amenôthes III. are to be read really date from the second or third century B.C.[1] The priests who rebuilt the chapel at Asfoun found some mention of a Psammetichus and a Manakhprê, most probably the Manakhprê of the XXIst Dynasty, among the scenes which ornamented the old walls, and in such a state that both cartouches seemed to belong to the same sovereign. They united them without misgiving, and of the two personages separated by time formed one single personage to whom they attributed the foundation of the building. Had they been clever enough to classify the names according to the usual rules, and to manufacture a Manakhprê Psammetichus instead of a Psammetichus Manakhprê, we should have had no

[1] This applies, among others, to the Temple of Theban Phtah described in Chapter IV.

means of discovering their error, and should have introduced an imaginary Pharaoh among the authentic ones. Their lack of skill opened our eyes, and we are indebted to them that we have been able to place the king of Asfoun with the shades of sovereigns whom the imagination of Egyptian scribes has brought out of the void, kings whom the credulity of the Greek writers long maintained in history.

XXII

ESNEH

Esneh is pre-eminently the town of wind, and the wind, no matter from what quarter it comes, is always a stormy wind. The north wind which came down on us this morning across Asfoun freshened so considerably towards nine o'clock, that navigation became almost impossible. The Nile changed in a few moments, and was covered with big waves which tossed our vessel in the most disagreeable fashion. The dahabieh lay on its side with such persistence that we sometimes wondered if she would ever right herself again. We were enveloped in a cloud of dust, and pursued our way without knowing where we were going, in perpetual fear of a collision. A sailing vessel laden with hay ran against us obliquely on the left, and scarcely had we got out of its way when a big Cook's steamer came up on the right. Ten yards nearer and it would have pierced the middle of our boat and sunk us.

It would be prudent to put in, but the embankment is steep and full of pointed stones and rocks, almost invisible in this disturbed state of the elements. The captain feared to be driven by the current during the manœuvre and to be dashed in pieces. About eleven o'clock, however, the sky cleared and the silhouette of a town rose vaguely in front of us. An outpost of gardens, an irregular line of houses, a slender minaret that seemed to bend under the blast, a mast above a consul's office on which an Italian flag twisted and flapped in desperation, and there was Esneh turning a surly-looking front and one difficult of access to the river. The captain, however, discovered a sort of creek near an old wall that seemed to be safe, and resolutely took us into it. As we reached it a last gust seized us and shook us, and the whole framework creaked and seemed to be torn asunder.

Modern Esneh crowns a hill, in some places from 25 to 30 yards high, formed of the débris of towns that have succeeded one another on the site from the beginning of history. For a long time the Nile flowed round it without touching it, but about 1820 it succeeded in making a breach, probably after an imprudent seizure of *sebakh*, and split it lengthways from south-east to north-east. A number of Mamelouk hotels and

gardens fell into the water, and the rest of the town would soon have been carried away if the Bey who was ruling at the time for Mehemet Ali had not intervened with unusual alacrity. Much stone is needed to shore up an embankment which is giving way, and it would have cost a very great deal had not God, who provides for the needs of His faithful, inspired the pagans with the idea of building immense temples in sandstone or granite. Every Pharaonic site possesses some which form quarries instituted by Providence for the benefit of administrators. Esneh was not less well provided than her rivals: she had three of reasonable size: one in the midst of her houses and almost under them, then two at a short distance off, the first on the north-west in the open country, the other on the east, beyond the river, near the village of Helleh. The temple in the town would have been preferable; for could it have been used expenses of transport would have been avoided, but the Minister of the Interior had taken possession of the chambers and arranged them as *chounehs*, stores for the taxes paid in kind for the whole of the province. The Pacha would have been very angry if a ruin he was using had been demolished, and so they had to be content with the temple ruins in the out-

skirts. The work must have been thoroughly executed, for to-day the blocks are no longer to be seen in the places where they stood. Two breakwaters and a supporting wall, which successfully resisted the inrush of the water for more than eighty years, were built with the pieces. A capricious road winds along its top: consular agencies, post and telegraph offices, a mosque, a court of justice, a *mamourieh*, all the official buildings, new or newly restored, line the river front, and hide the ordinary town from foreigners.

It has been very little influenced by European customs. Passing beyond the frontage described above, only houses in the ancient style are to be seen in grey brick or slightly coloured with white, placed unsymmetrically at the sides of malodorous alleys, at once picturesque and sordid, with domestic dirt and rags scattered everywhere. The dye-houses are close to the Nile round an oblong open space, and the sickening odour of damp indigo proclaims them from afar. Pools of blue water lie about, and large pieces of stuff hung over lines fastened across the roadway drip in the wind and dust.

After the dyers come the butchers, and then a large number of grocers, drapers, braziers, and goldsmiths. The merchants chat idly together from their shops without thinking of customers,

while at Siout, Keneh, and Louxor, in towns where trade is brisk, the European is stopped and disputed for at every turn. But here his questions are scarcely heeded or the objects he wishes to buy shown to him. We arrived on market-day; the large square swarmed with buyers and sellers, for, according to custom, all the fellahs of the province had come in. It is a unique occasion for us to make acquaintance with the products of the land. It is a very poor show, a few miserable vegetables, cabbages run to seed, overgrown salads, beans, stunted radishes, here and there some sugar-canes, a little wool, a little rope, half a dozen buffaloes, some camels, some hairless donkeys. Two or three women have spread out some variegated baskets and trays in a corner, things that the agents offer Cook's tourists, who pay very dear for them. The shapes are old, and the colours and design of the decoration go back to the Pharaonic age, but the methods of manufacture have sadly degenerated with the course of time. There is no resemblance to the workmanship and lightness of the baskets found in the tombs, or to the bright, warm tonality of the Soudanese basket-work. Traffic is going on briskly as we pass, and bargaining is proceeding all over the square. Very often it is only a matter of one or two centimes,

Roman sculptors were much inferior. The modelling of the bas-reliefs is uncertain, the arrangement of the ritual scenes is that of an unskilled practitioner rather than of an artist, the hieroglyphics have an awkward outline and are crowded together in disorderly fashion. It is the style of the Antonines and Severus in all its ugliness, and yet, in spite of these imperfections of detail, the whole has a masterly stamp, and the religious impression is as strong as in the Theban temples. Tourists invade it two or three times a week. Their conversation or their laughter awakes the echoes for a few minutes, just as the hymns of the priests did formerly; the echoes rise to the vaulted roof, and then sleep again till the next visit. They scarcely respond to the sound of our footsteps, but a family of sparrows, disconcerted by our visit out of the due season, fly from the back wall to the architrave, chirping and crying uneasily. A pigeon perched on one of the capitals stretches its neck and examines us curiously. A little of the peace of the old gods seems to have remained in the hall and to surround us.

The rubbish and earth which press on the walls are slowly but surely destroying them, and would overturn them if not soon removed. We have taken possession of some of the neighbouring

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masonry, but the chief of them, a half-ruined okelle, still resists us. It is a *wakf*, and *wakfs* require interminable negotiation. We shall, however, conquer in the end, and in two or three years the pronaos will be cleared. But how will it be with the rest of the temple? And what now remains of it? If, turning your back on the visible portions, you walk westward, through the town, you notice that the ground, after preserving the same level for a hundred or a hundred and twenty yards, suddenly slopes down, and descends almost to the level of the neighbouring plain. These deviations of the ground really show a plan of the temple under the network of streets. It is quite probable that if we suppressed the houses and dug down beneath them, we should soon come upon hypostyle halls, and then on the sanctuary, which, if not intact, would at least be partly preserved as at Kom-Ombo. It is a matter of money, and operations could be carried to success without a very large amount of trouble if it was done briskly with sufficient resources to indemnify all the landlords at once.

When finished the aspect of the monument would be very strange. Imagine a sort of vast amphitheatre, the circumference of which was adorned by houses, and in the middle a temple

with its colonnades, its chambers, its Holy of Holies, its girdle walls. Perhaps it was thus under the Cæsars at the time when the building was restored or received its present shape. Herodotus relates somewhere that at Bubastis the sanctuary of the Cat goddess was below the city. The houses surrounding it overhung its terraces, and their windows looked into its courtyards.[1] Similar necessities doubtless produced similar effects at Esneh. While the residence of the god remained fixed on the same level as its founders had placed it, the dwellings of men, continually rebuilt on their ruins, insensibly rose up round it and ended by burying it up to the height of its cornices.[2]

[1] Herodotus II. cxxxviii.

[2] Since this was written (January, 1907) the Service des Antiquités has succeeded in gaining possession of the last of the houses that hid the façade. Since January, 1910, the pronaos has been completely cleared, and one of our best officials, M. Baraize, is working hard to render it accessible to the public. Possession of the houses built over the halls and the sanctuary will follow as soon as we are able to afford the necessary sum of money.

XXIII

EL-KAB

The unburnt Egyptian brick is less perishable than stone. The walls of El-Kab, which are built of it, are in fairly good condition. Its temples of sandstone and granite have fallen to the ground and in places the foundations themselves no longer exist, nor the artificial bases by which they were supported. When the inhabitants of the neighbouring village want some hewn or unhewn stone to repair their houses, they come and help themselves as from a quarry, and, thanks to the distraction and complacency of our guards, they slyly break off with their hammers as many blocks as they need for the time being. They prefer to attack the inscriptions and bas-reliefs; for why should the Pharaohs have taken the trouble to draw those mysterious pictures if not to indicate to those who could understand them the spots where treasure was hidden under the protection of talismans? They always think that their blows will break the

EL-KAB. SMALL TEMPLE BUILT BY THE VICEROY OF ETHIOPIA FOR RAMSES II.

To face p. 248.

spell, and that the fragments will be suddenly changed into glittering rain of gold or silver. As a matter of fact nothing of the sort has ever happened to any one of their acquaintance, and they themselves have never found anything in the ruins except broken pottery or rubbish. But their faith survives every disappointment. The temples go on crumbling away, and in thirty years from now, despite all our care, very little will be left of them. The principal one looked southwards, and the Pharaohs rebuilt it several times in the course of the centuries, Thoutmôsis III. with the remains of the buildings of the XIIth Dynasty, Ramses II. with the pieces of the sanctuary of Thoutmôsis III., the Saîd sovereigns with pieces of the chapels of Ramses II. There, as at Thebes and Memphis, and indeed, everywhere, the last-comers fashioned new things out of the old material, material which had formed monuments before reaching their present position. But the earlier Egyptians, if they utilised them again, did not damage them. Modern Egyptians derive nothing from them except their limestone.

Nekhabit, the goddess of the place, was a vulture: her habitation was the right bank of the Nile, while Baoukou, the hawk, was worshipped at Kom-el-Ahmar on the opposite

shore. Her sacred lake, on which sailed the sacred boat containing her statue, had been formed at the east of the temple. It is now an oval-shaped pond, set deeply between the embankments, and the water remains in it from the beginning of August to the end of January. A few flocks of sheep, the property of the families living in the neighbourhood, come down to drink and to bathe as soon as the water rises; when the river subsides, the water quickly evaporates and becomes so brackish that the animals refuse to drink it. The town extends to the west and north-west, and until these last years some parts of it, especially those close to the girdle wall, had suffered little. There might be found the houses of the poor with their little courtyards and their two or three tiny rooms. Arched alleys wound among them, or rather irregular zigzag passages like those of Arab villages which twist among the mud huts in capricious windings, and which three times out of four end abruptly in a *cul-de-sac.* They are paved with fragments of pottery of no very remote date, and little research is needed to see that they come from the Christian town which did not survive the Arab invasion.

The Roman town, the Greek town, the Saîd town, all the towns that had followed one

another on the site from the beginning of history, lay one above the other in superimposed beds of unequal thickness. Directly the pickaxe is used, pieces of varnished faïence come forth, variegated glass, bronze or copper vases, blue or green enamel beads, and hundreds of those round stones which our workmen without the least misgiving declared to be the bullets of Pharaoh's artillery. In 1883 two hours of digging very little below the surface gave me the top of a stela of Pioupi II., the base of a nameless royal statue, a fine scarab of Thoutmôsis III., and a handful of brass coins with the name of the Emperor Aurelian. The harvest would be less rich at the present time if I cared to try my luck again. The peasants, encouraged to industry by the order prevailing in their country, have more than doubled the extent of the cultivated land, and have upset the site in order to obtain *sebakh*, the nitrous earth that serves them in place of manure. The dealers in antiquities have followed, and for several years have found the wherewithal to fill the shops of Louxor. The archæologists, as usual the last to arrive on the scene, methodically consummated the destruction. Neither houses, nor streets, nor open squares are any longer to be distinguished,

but only fragments of shaky walls, heaps of bricks or rubbish left on the edge of an excavated hole, a confusion in which the bric-à-brac of all ages is mingled. Tons of the rubbish must be gone over and sifted before discovering even one of the delightful objects earlier so easily found. Only the ramparts are intact.

Formerly they made a parallelogram, the long sides of which measured about 1,200 yards, but the Nile, with its capricious changes of direction, has eaten away the western corner and threatens before long to continue its ravages. A smaller breach has been made by the hand of man towards the north-west corner, probably during the last attack. The fellahs try to bring their irrigating trenches through it, and thus to gain the vague lands of the interior for cultivation. Except at those two points the wall preserves a uniform height of from 10 to 12 yards, and is only broken by the empty space where the ancient gateways used to be, one on the north front, the other on the east front. It is built of enormous bricks, arranged in undulating layers from one end to the other of the west and north faces. On the east and south it presents an alternation of panels, the beds of which run horizontally, with other panels which are concave and form an open reversed arch,

the extrados of which rests on the ground. The reason of this arrangement is not clear. According to some it prevented the slipping of the whole structure on the sand of the foundations and of the courses of masonry one on the other. Others declare that in case of a siege it localised and circumscribed the action of the battering-ram. The concussion produced by repeated shocks would not be felt beyond the panel attacked. Nothing of this is proved, but whatever the reason that ruled the Egyptian architects, their work lasted, and will continue to last, for a long while still if it is not systematically demolished. The wall is cracked from top to bottom through the influence of the weather or of earthquakes. It has been undermined at the bottom by the fellahs, who have torn away the nitrous bricks to crush them to manure their fields. It has lost its crenelles and its banquettes, but the round-way is on the average eleven yards wide and is reached by staircases or flights of steps concealed in the thickness of the walls.

El-Kab and its opposite neighbour, Kom-el-Ahmar, were frontier towns at the beginnings of history, for Nubia began a few miles from them towards the south. But while El-Ahmar, far away from the Nile, remained a barrage fortress good only to retard the march of an armed body

and immobilise it for a few weeks, El-Kab was the bulwark of the entire district. As soon as the look-out men posted on the rocks of El-Kalâa [1] signalled the approach of a barbarian fleet, or the sentinels, set at intervals on the crest of the chain of the Arabian hills, observed any movement among the tribes of the desert, the inhabitants of the villages sought refuge in the town with their flocks and what property they could easily transport there. They encamped within the walls until the crisis was over. What could men who knew no other engines of war than the scaling-ladder or the battering-ram do against so impenetrable a cuirass? After two or three ineffectual attempts at scaling the walls, they usually departed. Time and famine could alone reduce the place.

A thin line of vegetation runs beside the windings of the river. It does not equal the breadth of the town, and its eastern half is in the open desert. Archaic burying-grounds fill the north-east corner, cemeteries of the poor whose tombs contain only

[1] El-Kalâa, the fortress, is the name given by the inhabitants to the ruins of a fort of the Byzantine epoch, situated about a dozen miles to the south of Edfou on a projection of Gebel Serâg. Some excavating in that place about 1884 led me to believe that the Byzantine fort had followed a fort of the Pharaonic age which marked the frontier of the barony of El-Kab on the south.

rough pottery and the poorest decoration, necklaces of variegated pebbles or of enamelled faïence. The early aristocrats of El-Kab were poor wretches who were buried as they lived, among the common people and without more ceremony. They were not distinguished from the vulgar herd. About the middle of the XIIIth or XIVth Dynasty some of them determined to emigrate to a sort of low rock that stretches from east to west, a few hundred yards to the north-east. It is a mass of worn sandstone through which veins of greenish clay, impregnated with nitrates, filter in every direction. From olden times it was known to be so little solid that the venture of digging the deep tombs that were the fashion in Southern Egypt could not be made. The oldest of those that we know there is situated half-way up in a sort of spur that commands the plain, and it has only one small chamber, at the end of which the prince engraved a stela in his own honour. His age was not merciful to him; famine devastated the province, but his wise administration prevented the villages that depended on him being reduced to extremities. Other members of his family were placed under him or beside him in a poorer fashion still. Their chapel was a mere hole scooped out in the rock without paintings or sculptures, without any of the pictures that en-

sured an honourable after-life to the soul of the master. A stela, awkwardly cut on a little stone plaque, commemorated the name and the affiliation, but, badly fixed to the wall, it soon became unfastened and we do not now know who rested there. The successors of these unknown men played a glorious part in the wars of the early Pharaohs of the XVIIIth Dynasty, Kamôsis and Ahmôsis, against the Shepherd Kings. They acquired notable booty, and immediately acting like all of their period who became rich, they commissioned tombs worthy of their new fortune from skilful artists. Those tombs are reached from the town in a quarter of an hour across a plain formed partly of sandy quartz and partly of dry vegetable mould, to which a little moisture would easily restore its fertility. Sometimes after the storms that arise in the hills in spring or autumn, torrents rush down and inundate the place for five or six hours. Wherever the water has touched vegetation bursts forth. It blooms for several days with singular vigour, and then directly the water has evaporated dies as suddenly as it was born. The Assouân railway cuts the track which joins the town to the tombs almost in its centre. It follows the natural undulations of the ground so closely that we should not know where it was if the line of telegraph poles did not indicate the

direction. Nowhere as in this corner of Egypt does modern civilisation conceal itself with so much modesty.

A slope of rubbish leads to the platform of the tombs. There are gathered together the unpretending vaults in which the servants of each of the princes were buried under their master, so to speak, in order to give him even in death a last proof of their fidelity, as well as to profit by the advantages of the position, and so to share in the good offices of the funeral worship. Two or three of the aristocratic hypogeums are celebrated among Egyptologists for the documents they contain on the history of the time, and among tourists for the beauty of their sculptures and the brightness of their colouring. That of Pahiri has only one cell, but it is so well lighted by a large doorway that all the details of the decoration can easily be seen. The walls are covered, as if with a tapestry, with tiny figures which are industriously celebrating the most minute rites of the funeral. By what miracle have the colours been preserved almost in their first state? It is not due to tourists, pre-eminently the destructive race, having refrained from spoiling them. They began in the Græco-Roman epoch by cutting their names, and in some places their inscriptions are so numerous that they almost conceal the ancient drawing. But still the tones

persist, softened and blended like those of an old tapestry, and their relief is of an almost unique quality for that period. Traces of a provincial awkwardness are to be observed in them which puts them below what is to be seen in the fine Theban tombs; but if the artist's chiselling was somewhat stiff and betrayed inexperience, he possessed the gift of life, and his personages are to be admired for a naturalness and vivacity of expression often lacking in work of a more skilful technique.

On the right-hand wall Pahiri assists at his own funeral, and contemplates the animation of the guests while they eat with a kindly expression. At that time funeral feasts had the privilege of throwing those who attended them into a peculiar state of mind. At the beginning a sort of jovial sadness prevailed, which the firm resolve to celebrate the dead man worthily soon changed into excessive excitement lacking all decorum. The women themselves came with so good a will that we wonder where the legitimate expression of their grief ended. One of them says to the slave who is handing the wine, "Give me eighteen jars, for I want to get very drunk," and she adds philosophically, with a presentiment of possible consequences, "The place where we are is well provided with straw," in which to sleep themselves sober

again. On the opposite wall, the left-hand one, they are not so merry: it shows the transportation of the mummy, the arrival of the human victim, the sacrifice of whom was simulated at the door of the tomb, the dances of the buffoons in front of the procession, the lamentations of the weeping women. Pahiri watches the operations which are to assure him wealth in the other world, and leaving the city in a chariot, sets out for the fields. The chariot is yoked with two horses, and those two horses are the first of their kind that we see pictured. The horse was introduced into Egypt by the Shepherd Kings, and was perhaps a rarity at El-Kab when Pahiri ruled. The two brave beasts, tightly reined, gnaw their bits and neigh while awaiting their master's return. He, meanwhile, does not hurry himself, and standing on the borders of his fields, sees with one glance all the labour of the year. In one place they are ploughing or sowing; farther off, they are harvesting, grinding the grain, threshing it, carrying it to the granaries. It will eventually be his bread. Elsewhere the grapes are being gathered, pressed, left to ferment, and the wine poured into jars. Hunting, fishing, fish curing, potting of geese, are being actively carried on, as well as the care of flocks, and boating. There is such a quantity of everything, and it is all so good in

kind, that Pahiri ought not to want for anything even to this day.

The Egyptians possessed a feeling for nature which caused them to place their Houses of Eternity in spots where a wide view opened over the valley. Pahiri, when, as the Osirian dogma would exhort him to do, he came out of his tomb during the day, would see at one glance the shining land over which he had ruled. There was displayed before him El-Kab with its crenellated silhouette whence the fires lighted at sunset sent up their slow smoke into the evening sky. The thinly wooded hills of Kom-el-Ahmar bounded his horizon on the extreme west, the Nile flowed between with its convoys of boats, and at his feet the fellahs carried on indefatigably according to the season the labours pictured on the walls. Few places have remained more Pharaonic in character than this. The peasants at work wear the linen drawers and soft, close-fitting cap of their ancestors. Their hoes might be placed in the museums alongside of the ancient ones, and their swing-ploughs are a legacy of the antique world. In looking at them we feel as if Pahiri's farmers have become alive in their pictures and, shouldering their implements, urging their beasts, have descended on to the land to resume the task interrupted by thirty-five centuries of sleep. And

yet, far away in the south, near the hills that separate El-Kab from Radesieh, a sound is heard, but so slight that it is scarcely to be distinguished from the silence into which it sinks again at moments. But becoming more precise, more continuous, louder, it bursts into a noise of hard panting and heavy rattling of metal. It is the Assouân express arriving at full speed. It cruelly wakes us from our ancient dreams and recalls us to the realities of present-day life. The train passes on its way, its last carriage is hidden by the turn of the hill, and its noise is deadened and then killed in the north, while its smoke hangs over the ramparts and darkens the crests. In its turn the smoke melts into the sunny air, and with its disappearance the shadow of the modern world that had traversed and obscured the site vanishes. The fellahs, who had stood up for a moment to watch the train pass, bend again to the earth with the same slow, angular gesture that the sculptor has so accurately noted in the chapel of Pahiri.

XXIV

THE ENGLISH EXCAVATIONS AT KOM-EL-AHMAR

Kom-el-Ahmar—the Red Eminence—is situated on the left bank of the Nile, exactly opposite El-Kab, and to reach the ruins means a donkey-ride of three-quarters of an hour from the embankment to the desert. A well-marked path, a rare thing in Egypt, runs from the bank to the neighbouring village of El-Mouissat, crosses an irrigating canal and plunges among the houses. The land it traverses looks prosperous, small one-arched bridges cross the canal at intervals, and El-Mouissat, if not wholly clean, makes an effort towards cleanliness which is not without merit in this retired province of the Saîd. The houses are arranged in groups of three or four along the water, each with its little garden in which plants of the most varied species flourish at hazard, castor-oil plants and cotton plants, napecas, sonts, doums, beds of onions and leeks, square patches of garlic and bamiah. An ill-made deep road circulates

EXCAVATIONS AT KOM-EL-AHMAR.

To face p. 262.

among the mud walls or the hedges and leads to an irregular square where the market is held every Tuesday, between a stagnant pond and a mosque of which it is difficult to know whether it is in ruins or in process of construction. Twenty-four years ago, when I visited the district for the first time, it was almost a desert, and cultivation scarcely extended beyond the village. It has more than tripled itself since then, and its aspect is scarcely less pleasing than that of the plains of Europe. But this year [1] the inundation came late, and the spreading of the manure began about three weeks after the usual time. The wheat and barley are only just beginning to spring, the beans, which ought to be ripe, have only just decided to flower, and their perfume, brought out by the heat of the sun, subtly penetrates everywhere, blended with the odour of freshly wetted earth. The whole population is out of doors, the men for watering or for transporting the manure, the women and girls driving their buffaloes or goats. Meanwhile a few quails returned from the Soudan call to one another in the fresh verdure, crested larks reply to them from the mounds of earth, pigeons walk for a long time in front of our donkeys, and only fly up at the last extremity with an air of reproach, almost of comic indignation. We

[1] This was written in January, 1905.

really ought not to disturb them when we could so easily get out of their way! The birds here are not wild: as man does not hunt them, they have not learnt to be afraid of him, and live amicably in neighbourly fashion with him.

The canal is not entirely dry, and pools are to be seen here and there, but vegetation has invaded it, a little corn, a little lucerne, lupins, vetch. Two boats stranded at the bottom await the rising of the water in the midst of a field of lentils. Cultivated land begins again beyond, but becomes more and more meagre and languishing, and suddenly ceases at the exact point where infiltration and irrigation no longer reach it. The Pharaonic town stood on the borders of the desert about 300 yards from the canal. The hamlet of Kom-el-Ahmar covers a small corner of it, and the greater part of the ancient buildings were formerly buried under a shroud of sand brought by the wind. Mr. Quibell cleared out the ruins of the temple in which the Horus of the locality was worshipped. He extracted wonderful things—the gold falcon's head and the two copper statues of the Pharaoh Pioupi I. which are in the Cairo Museum—but he was obliged to abandon the site before he had exhausted it. This winter two other Englishmen, Mr. Garstang and Mr. Jones, undertook to finish the task. In the six weeks during which they have been

at work the accumulated rubbish forms a sort of wall round the excavations and hides them from view, so that we could approach them without being seen. The workmen did not suspect our presence until we were in the midst of them. We found them alone for the moment under the surveillance of a native overseer, and the work suffers from the absence of the European chief. The men rest between each stroke of the pickaxe, and the children squabble round their baskets. But directly they saw us the scene changed and all was activity. A boy of eight or nine years old intones a topical verse, his comrades forming a chorus—"*Ennahar-de, fi safiyeh*" (To-day there is good cheer)—and the pickaxes hurry on, the baskets are filled and emptied, the pit grows bigger, the overseer runs to the head of his troop ready to seize the first object that shall come forth, and all to the quick rhythm of the song. It is almost waste of trouble, on this side at least, and Mr. Jones has not much to hope for. Mr. Quibell has only left him rubbish, pieces of stelæ and of bas-reliefs, fragments of statues, common amulets, lost among millions of potsherds, all the broken pottery amassed by a hundred successive generations of careless housekeepers. But he goes on conscientiously, making his way from house to house, in no way discouraged by the poverty of his booty. At rare intervals a curious

object rewards his perseverance. The day before yesterday he found a tiny man's head in lapis-lazuli under a heap of rubbish in the angle of two walls. The modelling is delicate and the expression of great charm, but what gives it extraordinary value is that it fits a statuette of the same material that Mr. Quibell found not far from there seven years ago, and which is in the Oxford Museum.

The town was never very important. It possessed a temple of medium size and without architectural pretensions, two or three State warehouses in heavy masonry, a few thousand inhabitants crowded into clay huts like those with which the Egyptians are still contented, but little trade, no industries, and for food the narrow tongue of land that the people of El-Mouissat are struggling to reclaim. And yet, situated as it was on the oldest frontier of the country, its position gave it importance in primitive times, and its princes played a great part under the Thinite Pharaohs or their predecessors. Allied with the rulers of El-Kab and Edfou, they defended the borders of the South against the tribes of the Soudan, and more than one Nubian or Berber invasion came to nothing under the walls of their fortress. The fortress has not perished and stands almost intact about a hundred yards from the town. It was not, as at El-Kab opposite, an immense intrenchment

in which the whole population of the district with its cattle and provisions could take refuge at the least sign of a rising. It was a fortress of restricted proportions, a rectangular enclosure of unburnt bricks, formed by two walls. The outer wall made a sort of crenellated revetment which was originally four or five yards high. The rampart properly so called measured from six to seven yards at the base, but mounted, gradually diminishing in width to the height of eleven or twelve yards, measuring at the top only five yards. It is smooth, without embrasures or loopholes but crenellated with rounded battlements, and decorated on the outside with long prismatic stripes. The bricks were covered with whitewash edged with red marks. The gate was placed in the south-east corner, in the centre of a compact mass of masonry which projected sharply in the front of the fortification. A narrow opening, barred with a two-winged door of solid wood, closed it on the outer side ; a little courtyard placed in the thickness came beyond, and at the end on the left a second door, as narrow as the first, gave access to the interior. It was occupied by dwelling-houses, barracks, stores for food and ammunition, and in time of peace the prince held his court there. At the first sign of war, if he had not men enough to go out against the enemy, he shut himself up in it

with his troops and made a long resistance. A breach in the south front seems to prove that the fortress was carried by assault in the last siege it underwent, but it was seldom that so well-fortified a place succumbed to a direct attack. As at El-Kab, the enemy usually waited in patience until hunger or thirst overcame resistance.[1]

The ground is broken up round about, and heaps of bricks and pulverulent human bones mark the places which Mr. Quibell excavated. The oldest cemeteries were placed at intervals on the sandy plain, at the north and west, but tombs of recent epochs are mingled with the primitive sepulchres, and modern hands have so effectually upset everything, that it is often difficult to distinguish one from the other. The equipment is very poor, coarse pottery, mats, rotten stuffs, necklaces and bracelets of pebbles or variegated glass, here and there jewels in precious metals, or amulets. The people were as poor in death as in life. The princes and their families must have been more richly buried somewhere in the hill, but most of their tombs are unknown to us. About a mile or two from the fortress, however, half-way down the hillside, entrances to hypogeums are to be seen, those which M. Bouriant and I studied nearly thirty years ago. They are miserable tombs, hastily hewn out,

[1] Cf. Chapter XXIII.

and almost without decoration. Rare inscriptions tell us that they sheltered the mummies of princes and high priests contemporary with the first Thoutmôsis, but one of them, in better condition than the others, was appropriated and repainted under Ramses XII. Mr. Jones set up his camp there. He stored his provisions in one, slept in another, made a kitchen on the platform opposite the third, which served as a dining-room, and stored the objects that he obtained in the course of his excavations in a fourth. A large ouady opened out at his feet and offered him wide views over the desert to the south. Before him the whole valley was displayed, shining as if with gold, and bordered with yellowish sand. He saw the old fortress grey in the midday sun, the eminence of Kom-el-Ahmar whence rose the dust of the excavations, the green of the trees and the grain, the reflections in the Nile, and bounding the horizon the hills of El-Kab, with their barren tops, their slopes down which the light seems to flow as in a slow stream, and the bluish shadows in the hollows.

XXV

EDFOU

If I was asked which among the towns of modern Egypt had best preserved the physiognomy and internal arrangements of an ancient city, I should reply without hesitation, Edfou. It is heralded in the distance by its temple, and the traveller proceeding up the Nile in his dahabieh sees the two towers long before reaching it, as did the pilgrim of old when devoutly wending his way there to worship the falcon of Horus. An hour after leaving El-Kab the towers may be faintly descried above the trees, then almost immediately they are again hidden by the trees, to reappear after a few minutes a little higher. At each turn, when we catch a fresh glimpse of them, they seem to join to them a little more of their surroundings, the minaret of one of the mosques, square pigeon-houses, two or three panels of whitewashed walls, an irregular group of yellow and grey houses, an embankment cut almost straight in the black alluvium, two or three boats, a *sakieh* which sends its grating music out

EDFOU. ENTRANCE TO THE MAIN TEMPLE.

To face p. 270.

into the breeze night and day, a belt of green corn and vegetation, a noisy suburb sprung up out of the ground twenty years ago, a canal, a bridge of bricks and wood, and at last the village properly so called with its low huts and almost deserted alleys. Dogs, too lazy to bark at strangers, sleep languidly in the shade. We meet two or three women shapeless in their long veils. A door is noisily opened behind us, and the muffled sound of conversation is heard behind the walls. Two towers to the right, one tower to the left, a kouttab humming with the sound of reading aloud, a sudden bend, and there before us, above us, all around us, stands the huge temple. It was formerly buried at the bottom of a pit, where Mariette, having cleared it out, suddenly left it. The Service des Antiquités has just spent eight years in disengaging it more completely.

In order to do that, about forty houses had to be bought and pulled down, and in some places twenty or thirty yards of débris had to be cleared away, and the task is not yet finished. But the court is freed and the site of the sacred lake, and a little in front of the pylon, on the left, a scarcely perceptible chapel, that to which the goddess of Edfou retreated in the spring in order to give birth to the Divine Son of the local triad. The monumental doorway by which the

pilgrims entered the temenos was freed from rubbish three years ago;[1] and although the excavations have not been pushed far enough on that side, they enable tourists to stand sufficiently far back to view the façade in all its extent. The striking and barbarous ornamentation with which the architects formerly adorned it can now be seen, the four gigantic masts from which variegated banners floated in the breeze, the veneering of raw colours which set off the triumphal bas-reliefs of the Ptolemaic kings, the shining gilded wings of its colossal door. The masts have been burnt, the cornices have fallen down, the rain has washed out the colours, and the noonday sun, striking the grey surface, seems to devour the sculptures; the outline of the figures can scarcely be distinguished by the thin line of shade that runs along their contours. The impression of assured strength, which formerly gained much of its vivacity from the violent colouring and rich decoration, results now solely from the immensity of the proportions, and is not, perhaps, less powerful for that. Nowhere in Egypt, not even at Karnak, is what the Pharaohs meant, when they boasted of having founded everlasting stone monuments in honour of the gods, better to be understood. We cannot imagine that

[1] This was written in January, 1906.

buildings set up in so masterly a fashion could succumb to anything but a sustained effort of human perversity. And yet, if we examine them closely, we shall soon recognise that in many places they are at the end of their resistance, and several parts of them threaten to succumb from the weakness of old age. Air and sun have injured some of the blocks to a point that we can hollow them out with the finger; elsewhere the pressure of the earth or of rubbish has bent the walls in the centre, and the movement thus caused in the masonry did not cease until the rubbish was cleared away. Six years ago the western wall of the enclosure was in so bad a condition that I feared a speedy fall. It had to be cut down for a length of about ninety yards, the foundations had to be strengthened, the blocks put up again and adjusted with minute exactitude, so as to restore accurately the mythological and religious scenes which sanctified the two sides. M. Barsanti, to whom the work was entrusted, accomplished it with his accustomed skill and audacity. But when he had finished he saw that the western portico was in as great danger as the wall had been. I sent him back in 1905, with the order to put everything right by the same methods that had formerly been so successful.

He was again equally successful and rapid. The walls, columns, ceilings of the portico were

put in a condition of perfect stability. In a few weeks the scaffoldings will be removed and the building will have resumed its ordinary aspect. The works are carried on with a discreet activity, without useless display of strength, without insults from the overseers or hostile grumbling from the workmen, and the few tourists who watch the operations would never suspect how dangerous they often are. The entire portico had deviated from west to east, and eleven of its columns were only held in position by the architraves which joined them, and by the ceiling, the slabs of which weighed on them. No attempt could be made to set them straight before shoring up the whole mass, and the least awkwardness committed during the preliminary operation risked the fall of the whole on the workmen. M. Barsanti propped up the ceiling, timbered the wall, equipped and buttressed the columns with immense pitch-pine beams. Directly the safety of the whole was assured, he took down the blocks that formed the cornices, then applying screwjacks to the ceiling he lifted the slabs a foot above the top of the walls and fixed them in the air for ten months on frames of timber-work.

Next he attacked the architraves, but instead of taking them down, a proceeding that would have required double the time and expense, he placed

them on cradles of beams prepared on their east side. He was on the point of ordering the columns to be pulled down, when an incident happened which nearly prevented success. The master mason and his assistants were terrified by so many stones suspended above their heads, and declared that unless they were brought down to the ground they would leave the spot. M. Barsanti installed himself beside them under the mass to prove the needlessness of their fears. Seeing him so resolute, their confidence was somewhat restored, but the first few hours were very uncomfortable. If a piece of wood creaked, or a rope vibrated as it was tightened, the men fled in every direction, and it was not an easy matter to gather them together again. Nevertheless the corner column was taken to pieces and stored away without accident in a day of ten hours. The second column only took eight hours, and the workmen becoming hardened, the business was finished sooner than we could have hoped. In less than two months the eleven leaning columns were taken down and set up again in the perpendicular, the architraves returned to the places they had left, the ceiling descended on to the architraves, and the portico was more robust than it had been for thirty years before its misadventure. In the course of the

manipulations nothing suffered, neither inscriptions nor pictures, and when the apparatus was removed no trace of the work that had been accomplished would have remained if we had not been obliged to fill up the points of the courses of masonry with cement, the dull colour of which will contrast for a few months with the warmer tonality of the antique stone. The Pharaohs would have been immensely proud of so well executed an enterprise; they would have recorded it in big hieroglyphics on a stela with much emphasis and prolixity, extravagant in praise of themselves and prayers to the gods. Such panegyrics on stone are out of fashion. M. Alexandre Barsanti will think himself fortunate if the four years of hard work and anxiety which Edfou cost him obtain a couple of lines in the next edition of some tourists' Guide to Egypt.

At off times he had worked at the slight retouchings in the interior rendered necessary by its condition. The good folk of the village had not inhabited the halls for fourteen centuries with their poultry and their cattle without doing some damage. In one place they had hammered the portraits of the pagan divinities which decorated the walls, in order to kill the demons that animated them. Elsewhere their wives had scraped or scooped out the stone in order to obtain

a sandstone powder which, mixed with their food, would cure their diseases or procure for them a blessed fertility. The ceilings of several chambers no longer exist, and one January morning only five years ago pieces of the ceiling of the hypostyle hall fell down.[1] Two hours earlier or later, they would have fallen on a band of tourists, and many of them would have been crushed. The breach is now closed up, the cracks have been stopped with mortar, the pictures are clear, and the hieroglyphics stand out with such sharply defined contours that colour alone is wanting to make the restoration perfect. It would involve too great a risk to attempt to restore the colour notwithstanding the many traces of it that still persist, but I often ask myself if we ought not to restore the door-frames and the objects used in religious worship in one of the chambers. It would be easy to make the doors in Syrian or Caramanian wood with bronze hinges and touches of gilding. The sockets still exist at the foot of the jambs and lintels, and would give us the correct dimensions of the pivots on which the wings of the doors turned. The delicately chiselled pictures on the walls of the sanctuary show us the principal objects that it contained and the way in which they were arranged. First

[1] Cf. Chapter XIII.

there was the large granite naos, consecrated by Nectanebo before the building of the actual edifice, and in which was enclosed the image of the god, a gigantic falcon in gilded wood. Then in front of the naos on a block of stone came the sacred boat that was carried in procession through the streets and fields on festival days. It is represented in its natural size, with its litter, its figures on poop and prow, its tabernacle half veiled with some white stuff, its oar-rudders, and on each side, to the right and left, the altars, the ledges laden with bread and cakes, the libation vases, the mats, the dishes of offerings. A skilful joiner could soon have faithfully copied the furniture, and with the assistance of the half-light that prevails in such places, visitors suddenly confronted with the mystic apparatus would have a momentary vision of the past.

They could even, if they so desired, procure it now by standing on one of the towers of the pylon at sunset. The staircase winds through the mass so gently, that the 240 steps are climbed almost without fatigue. Narrow air-holes cut in the south wall let in a scanty amount of light, and a side door open on each of the landings leads to the priests' chambers. Two or three of them served as guard-rooms for the little French garrison which held the country during Napoleon's expedition. At the

EDFOU. GENERAL VIEW.

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beginning there were about 150 men, infantry and cavalry, but sickness and perpetual skirmishing with native marauders gradually reduced the number. At each fresh funeral the survivors engraved the name of their dead comrade in a corner, adding the date and a cross, and then resumed their daily avocations. The hours passed slowly in this far-away village, and if the older soldiers had some pleasure in proclaiming that *the French are conquerors everywhere*, others thought regretfully, one of his far-off Rosalie, another of the windmill in his native village, which he drew with the point of his knife on a block of stone, with its pointed roof and all its sails unfurled.

The platform which crowns the eastern tower no longer exists, but the masonry on which the slabs rested projects in the interior along the parapet like a roundway, and thence there is a view over the country. It is the usual Egyptian landscape, but more meagre than in the environs of Esneh and Kom-el-Ahmar. We see two chains of low, jagged, black hills striped with yellow where the sand flows down, a muddy and almost deserted Nile, rows of trees twisted by the wind, patches of vegetation standing out in strong contrast with the grey colour of the plain. The sun sets quietly, throwing the ever lengthening shadow of the temple over the town. The fires for cooking the

evening meal are lighted, and, as in the melancholy lines of Virgil, the roofs of the houses smoke. The falcons hover round us, describing large circles before regaining their eyries, and mingled with their cries uncertain sounds of voices float up now and again to the tower top. The women call to one another from the terraces, the men, seated or standing on the threshold of their doors, engage in serious conversation across the street, and pointing to us, seem uneasy about what we are doing up there at so late an hour. Is it really Edfou of to-day that is sinking to rest before our eyes? The few signs of modern life, the minaret of the mosque, the telegraph poles, the iron pipes of the steam-pump, are effaced in the soft light of the dying day. Modernity is concealed in the uncertain pallor of twilight, and the call of the muezzin sounds in our ears like a feeble echo of the chants with which the priests of Horus greeted the daily death of their god.

XXVI

ASSOUÂN

The north wind strikes sharply in our faces, grey clouds chase each other across the sky, the sun shines yet without warmth, one of those dry, clear suns that are frequent in France in the month of March, days when spring, not yet sure of itself, makes an attempt to come forth, and yet, in spite of the wind and the cold, we are on the very frontiers of Upper Egypt. To right and left are the worn sandstone hills and golden sands which herald Nubia. Here are groups of date-palms and doum-palms, of acacias and tamarisks, which form a thin screen behind the blackish banks; here are dusty patches of castor-oil plants and clover, huts of twigs and mud, *chadoufs*, *sakiehs:* and then in the background the stained cupola of the tomb of the saint who presides over Assouân. The town is suddenly revealed at the turn of a last wooded promontory between the shore of El-Qôz and the southern point of Elephantine; there are the villas half-hidden in trees, barracks, church, gardens,

then a straight front of white houses, above which the heap of old buildings of the colour of the ground rises pyramidally. A large sandbank has lately risen across the channel and does not permit access to all. Light boats can go up without much trouble, at least in winter-time, and pushing straight between islets of brown granite round which the water foams, make land at last beyond the broken piles of a Roman jetty. The others pass to the west, and double Elephantine to reach the port of the southern side, as if they were coming from the Cataract.

Where is the Assouân of twenty years ago,[1] the half-Nubian village, its originality as yet unspoilt by a European admixture? No railway disgorged every evening carriage-loads of dusty tourists; four or five dahabiehs at most rode at anchor far apart in the height of the season. The post-boat brought up a few dozen tourists in the week, and twice a month Cook's parties arrived in a big steamer. Then for two or three days there was going and coming of small boats between Elephantine and the mainland, donkeys galloping along the road to Philæ, warlike reviews of Barabras at ten francs a dance, ballets of almehs, endless bargainings for Nubian swords and weapons, ostrich feathers, raw ivory, Soudanese

[1] This was written in 1902.

stuffs, or jewellery. One fine morning the whistle announced departure, and amid a sound of paddle-wheels civilised man set out for the north as noisily as he had come. The town, delighted with its gains, but tired of the confusion, uttered a sigh of relief and lazily sank to sleep again to the lullabies of the *sakiehs*.

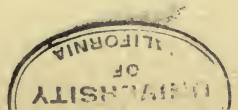
But now from the middle of December to the middle of March Assouân never sleeps. It has become a winter resort, like Nice or Sorrento, and has had to transform itself to satisfy the demands of its passing visitors. The embankment, formerly so picturesque, though rough and dirty, has been replaced by a regular quay, with decorations in brick, adorned with palms already high and with lebakhs which will grow if Heaven pleases. The whole front is almost European in appearance, with its banks, post-office, hospital, fountain, chapel, cafés, hotels, taverns, shops with glass windows and covered with advertisements. A Dalmatian photographer invites you in composite French not to buy your films anywhere except at his shop. His neighbour, a Greek tobacconist, offers you the best to be had in cigarettes and silks, all English, but if you need eau de Cologne you must go on farther to the Italian bookseller, who will supply you. As you pass obliging Parsees cry their cloths, printed in loud colours, and their

coarse Indian silver-work. At the southern end two or three cabs of the most correct pattern await custom with resignation, at the head of a rank of numbered donkeys, and then the railway station with its level entrance marks the end of the esplanade.

Here, then, the quay ends, and the shore reappears, capricious, scattered over with all kinds of breakneck objects, bristling with heaps of broken stones, piles of wood, of barrels or of sacks, but also with booths and tents that betray a fair in which toys and popular cakes are offered for sale, where there is cooking in the open air, and even an itinerant circus under the French flag, whence a freshly shorn ass's foal and a superb white camel come forth to the tune of a polka to drink at the river. It is time to turn aside if we wish to escape these suburban attractions, and we strike into a silent street which, turning its back to the town, seems to plunge south into a desert of granite and sand. The site has the wretched aspect of the outskirts of cities, houses in ruins, unproductive gardens, vague plots of ground disfigured by filth, through which the road winds and climbs. A portion of a mosque totters on the right, a trench is hollowed where the road sinks down, and suddenly, as in Perrault's fairy tale, the ground half opens and a courtyard appears

at the bottom framed on two sides by long, new buildings. A troop of young people on donkeys come out of the gateway and strike into the country. Groups of people walking about stop their chatting to watch them, and then begin to talk again faster than ever. Two dragomans dispute in a corner and mutually curse their father. A cook, dressed in white, his cap on one side and his knife in his waistband, chases a boy who has stolen a pigeon from his kitchen. It is the Cataract Hotel, which is the beginning beyond Assouân of a second Assouân, more European than the first. Exactly opposite, the English Church rears its cupola, finished last year, and a little to the south the reservoir, finished this year, stands on the height.

If the town has done its best to receive its visitors according to their taste, the visitors for their part have not been ungrateful. Doubtless passing tourists form the great majority of them, but from year to year the number of invalids or of sun-lovers increases, who come to bask in the sun, and to leave with regret at the beginning of spring. During the winter the temperature is equable, the sky clear, the population, except the beggars, amiable and easy to get on with, and the hotels offer those who are not afraid of the expense more intelligent luxury than is to be found in the best



hotels in Italy. Many people do not now stay at Louxor, as was the custom only three or four years ago, but travel straight through from Cairo to Assouân. In the first days of their sojourn most of them are consumed with an intense archæological ardour, and rush incontinently to the antiquities. They traverse the spot where the Temple of Elephantine was, the quay built of blocks torn from the old buildings of the island, the Nilometer restored by Mahmoud Pacha, and buy Christian lamps or fragments of papyrus from the Berbers. They attack the hundred steps of the staircase which leads to the tomb of the old princes, and marvel at the barbarism of the hieroglyphics or figures with which they are decorated. They hasten to Deîr Amba Simâan to study the vestiges of Coptic painting, and are nothing daunted by the five miles that separate them from Philæ. Is not the railway of Chellâl there to help them to cover the distance in forty minutes? With some zeal increases in proportion as the stay is prolonged, and is exercised in the interests of science. It led the Princess Royal of Sweden fifteen years ago to undertake most successful excavations. More often it cools at the first signs of fatigue, and less exacting distractions take its place. Elective affinities soon show themselves between these persons of such differing nationalities, and groups

are formed which attract and repel with varying force. The hazard of travelling in the same carriage or of a meeting in the corridors has brought persons into relations; they talk to each other a little, walk together a little, then sit at the same table, and after the meals find a corner in the drawing-room or on the verandah for playing bridge or discussing their neighbours' affairs. Card-playing is the great resource, I will not say against *ennui*, for there is no *ennui* in the life, but against the monotony of the days. But even so, it is not possible to fill up all the hours of the day with cards, and as many opportunities as possible are made to go out. On Sundays the Church services fill up the time, but in the week visits are industriously exchanged between the hotels, and as everybody has more or less contempt for the hotel he does not happen to inhabit, it is with some slight satisfaction or real annoyance, according to circumstances, that the advantages or otherwise are discussed. The dinner is better at the Cataract, but at the Savoy the dining-room is reached by a monumental staircase, the fine proportions of which afford some compensation for the defects of the cook. There is a good deal of music and as much dancing as circumstances permit, picnics are organised on the granite islets, a party is made up to sketch in the desert or in

the camp of the Barabras, and if nothing more interesting offers, there is the bazaar, where a couple of hours of the afternoon can easily be killed.

The bazaar is not very large, but it is one of those that have best preserved an aspect of Eastern tradition. The hilly street which runs through it and the streets branching off from it are roofed with planks as in olden times, and the shade thus spread over the stalls does no harm to the greater part of the objects to be seen there. Occasionally unexpected discoveries are made. Nearly twenty years ago I acquired as an antiquity a white clay pipe, the head of which was a portrait of Robespierre, as the words traced in enamelled letters round the hatband testified. It had been the property of one of the French soldiers left behind after the retreat of the army; but how had so fragile a thing remained unbroken among those Berber hands? This year I found no revolutionary pipe, but metal buttons seemed to me to abound—buttons of the Republican army, buttons of the first Regulars of Colonel Selves, buttons of the time of Ibrahim the Victorious or of Saîd Pacha, buttons of contemporary English soldiers—a whole course of history in military buttons. The rest of the things consist of the ordinary objects in the bazaars of Upper Egypt—Russian or Persian enamels,

Indian filigree work, inlaid work, and the red earthenware of Siout, jewels of the Soudan or of the Hedjaz, ostrich feathers eaten away by vermin, an incoherent mass of African weapons, zagaies, boar-spears, rhinoceros leather shields or such like, lances, knives, swords with cross-shaped guards on their flat sheaths—all handled in confusion by young women in bright toilettes who bargained without ever buying anything, or by hurried tourists who buy without ever bargaining, by dragomans interested in the sale, by insinuating Parsee agents expert in fleecing their customers. Farther on, the European crowd is less, but business is more serious—in the bazaar of cotton stuffs, of shoes, of ironmongery, of provisions—and it is a pleasure to see a curly-headed, rosy-cheeked grocer in the classical uniform of the trade serve a half piastreworth of moist sugar to dark-skinned fellah women or dishevelled Ababdehs. But the shops grow fewer, the bazaar gradually and almost imperceptibly melts into the ordinary street, and before we know it old Assouân reappears, solitary and dusty. We are in dark alleys, tunnels enclosed between the two walls of shaky houses; we see the door of a mosque through which comes the undefined murmur of a monotonous voice; children are playing in the dust without enthusiasm; one or two veiled women pass close to the wall,

then at the outlet of a square a corner of the desert becomes visible, the silhouette of two or three unsteady Santons, pieces of bricks set edgewise, tombs freshly whitewashed, the cemetery where the town has buried its dead from generation to generation, from the time of the Musulman conquest.

There sleep in the peace of Allah the descendants of the Mecca and Medina colony led by Amr ben el-As in 640, the *Ashab en-Nabi*, friends of the Prophet. An old devotee who is pursuing his meditations crouching against a door lifts his head on hearing their names, and offers to show us the principal tombs. They no longer preserve the form of a monument; the walls have burst open, time has cut the cornices into irregular festoons, cupolas are split open, and the sanctuaries are laid bare to the gaze of the Gentile as to that of the true believer. The funerary stelæ, many of which were in beautiful writing, were all taken away several years ago and transported to Cairo, where they fill up the Arab Museum, but our guide knows who were the owners of each ruin, and drones out their history. They were all very great saints, and innumerable miracles are related of them, miracles which even still continue to work. The Cheîkh Ali Abi-Yousef Abou-Thaleb cures rheumatism and gout. The sick person

enters his oratory, and after praying lays himself flat on the ground along the wall. An invisible hand grasps him, rolls him across the chamber, and he gets up quite well at the other end. The Cheîkh Mohammed ibn-Abou-Thaleb is inimitable in restoring objects lost by or stolen from his faithful worshippers. You go and pray over him, and on your return home find the things in their accustomed place, or you meet the thief, who brings them back in spite of himself. Once a peasant who had stolen a bag of dates tried to resist the suggestion that oppressed him and to flee to the desert, but after walking all night he found himself at dawn at the door of the man he had robbed without in the least knowing how he came there. And these stories of miracles told in the oncoming darkness, in the midst of the desolate cemetery, assume an extraordinary importance. Our guide believes them with all his soul, and despite the difference of religion between us, he does not suspect that we do not believe them too. He respectfully passes his hand over the tops of the tombs in order to remove a few atoms of dust, then he rubs his face or breast and recites the Musulman profession of faith in a concentrated voice : he steeps himself in the essence of the saint, and wishes to steep us in it too for our good. He interrupts his devotions to shout to us that

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people come from everywhere—from Roum, India, China, the land of Ouakouak, the country of the negroes—to the relics of these saints. Such a pilgrim will sell his property and sail or ride for months before reaching Assouân. He prays over the glorious sepulchres, comforts himself with a pinch of the sacred dust, and then straightway departs, entirely happy to have purchased even at the price of his whole fortune the privilege of visiting the spot where repose the most venerated of the friends of the Prophet. And we who accompany him have come on a day blessed above all others. By a strange coincidence it happens that the 27th of Ramadan falls this year on a Friday; and is not the night of the 27th of Ramadan the celebrated night of dignity, *Lelet el-kadr*, during which the Koran was delivered to Mahomet? The day declines, soon the gates of the firmament will open, and angels will descend to bring the benefits of Heaven to the creatures of earth. Until dawn all prayers will ascend without hindrance to the ears of God, and none will be refused so long as it contains no desire contrary to the law. I had some scruple in only offering a couple of piastres by way of a tip to a guide so learned in the things of heaven and earth, but it must be believed that in giving us his services his sole thought was not of material gain, for he heaped blessings on us.

The setting sun had shed its last light, and the stars were coming out one after the other, when we decided to depart. The bazaar was not yet closed, and sounds of merry voices together with a smell of cooking announced the beginning of one of those feastings which make up each evening for the strict fasting of the days of the month of Ramadan. Everywhere the streets were empty, the doors closed, the houses silent, while the magic darkness of night in the East spread over the buildings of modern Assouân, modifying its vulgarity. Suddenly the chant of the muezzin burst over our heads. It was the melody that Félicien David noted, and that his " Desert " made popular in France, but here was the air intoned by a young, fresh, clear, resonant voice, triumphant with faith and trust in a merciful and victorious God. The quay was deserted, the river silent, Elephantine bounded the horizon with its uncertain outline. Instead of the confusion and noise of the daytime there reigned everywhere the reposeful delight in living that no one can ever boast he has completely felt if he has never been in Egypt.

XXVII

THE CONVENT OF ST. SIMEON NEAR ASSOUÂN

Assouân was ardently Christian before becoming ardently Musulman, and for centuries possessed at least as many churches as it counts mosques to-day. But now its Christianity has vanished without leaving any traces, except the ruins of several considerable convents to be found in the outskirts. There are some to the south, among the rocks that dominate the Cataract Hotel, among the tombs built for the friends of the Prophet. There are some to the east, on the borders of the Libyan Desert, but dismantled and so covered up by sand that their traces are scarcely visible. There are some again on the other side of the Nile, against the cliff where the princes of the VIth and XIIth Dynasties dug out their tombs. Only one, that of St. Simeon,[1] has remained intact and deserves a visit.

[1] I have kept this name here, which is that used in the Tourists' Guides, I do not know on what authority. The people of the district call it Deîr Amba Hedere, and it is in

The Convent of St. Simeon

It is best to set out about three o'clock, when the heat of the day is beginning to lessen and the river resumes its customary animation. The Ababdehs and sellers of false scarabs, revived by their siesta, persecute the strangers who arrived in the morning, and are not yet acquainted with them, with their offers. The boats, dressed with flags, pass each other noisily, sailing, rowing, disembarking tourists from the island at the town and tourists from the town at the island. One of the three or four of Cook's "Ramesses" gets up steam for departing, and when ready summons its passengers by strident whistles. A little farther to the south an American dahabieh lowers its larger lateen sail-yard, which, as it is returning to Cairo, will not henceforth be needed. The musician of the crew sends forth his most exquisite roulades in order to enliven the work, and native melomaniacs, crouching on the bank, utter sounds of ecstasy towards the end of the cadences. The current becomes swifter as the channel grows narrower, the boatmen lean more to their oars, and at the turn of the old quay Assouân suddenly disappears; at the same moment all the sounds of music or of human voices become silent as if carried

fact placed under the protection of Saint Hatre, or, in the vulgar pronunciation, Hedere, one of the most holy saints of Egyptian Christianity.

away by the breeze that blows from the Cataract. Pagnon's Hotel is in sight for a few minutes, then it vanishes in its turn, and we might think ourselves far from modern Egypt if below on a height an English redoubt did not ostentatiously display its newly whitened walls.

Across on the right Elephantine slowly defiles, its shore scattered over with blocks half buried in the sand, its Tell dug out and undermined by the *sebakh* diggers, with its dark-coloured embankment that is being continually destroyed and restored by the current, with its quincunxes of palm-trees of unequal heights. The water murmurs and flows swiftly round us, in front of us, behind us, divided into a hundred foaming channels by the granite blocks, chiefly of a dull red colour, the sides of a shining black where the inundation has polished them. Here and there several are joined together by banks of gravel or strips of compact slime, so as to form islets bristling with weeds and brambles run wild. A few acacias have by some chance sprung up on the largest and pretend to give shade. A family of Berbers have installed themselves in a low hut made of mud and twigs, and in the winter manage to cultivate a few poor vegetables. It is the very borderland of the savage life: two or three hens scuttle away when they see us, a tethered goat cries out in distress,

and the dog, awakened by the noise, barks at us as long as we remain in sight.

The creek where we disembark must often have been crowded and noisy in the days of the convent's prosperity. Everything brought to the monks from outside must perforce have landed there: convoys of provisions and cattle, troops of pilgrims, soldiers told off to police the desert, merchants, farmers, tax-collectors, the servants, vassals and serfs that the active monasteries of the Saîd then attracted to themselves. Now it is only frequented by tourists from Assouân during the four months of the season, but the natives of Elephantine have appropriated to themselves the strip of alluvium that borders it by right of seizure, and there cultivate a few castor-oil plants, a little bersim, lupins, beans, and barley, and thus there is along the waterside a velvety bordering of young springlike verdure. It is only fifteen yards at its widest, and in Europe the game would not be worth the candle, but cultivable land is so rare in Egypt that nothing is despised. The labourers will obtain for a few weeks more food than they could glean elsewhere, and will thus be able to reach the end of the year without having to endure famine. Beyond, stretches a belt of withered, dishevelled alfas, and then behind the alfas comes the bare, sterile desert. The ouady

goes its way in a gentle slope between two hills the soil of which is becoming exhausted, and opposite us at the culminating point the monastery stands out against the sky, with the grim profile of its walls. The rock shows in places, black and grey, but a golden sand fills in the hollows, a fluid sand that is made by the decomposition of the sandstone in the sun. The sand of the third ravine, to the left in leaving the river, is the object of singular veneration to the riverside population. They imagine that it will cure them of fever and all serious maladies. They scale the cliffs at one effort, and when the top is reached, recite a short prayer—the Musulmans, the *fâtikha*,[1] the Christians, *Our Father;* then they lie down on their right side and roll down the slope. If they get to the bottom at one attempt, without stopping, the cure is immediate. If there is any pause on the way they may try twice again, but if the third time they are still unsuccessful, it is well to think of making their will, for they are condemned without hope of remedy. Like many customs of the same sort, this one has its origin in antiquity. The charm first worked by the power of Khnoumou, lord of the Cataract, then Khnoumou transmitted it to St. Hedere, and now a Musul-

[1] The *fâtikha* is the first *sourate* of the Koran, that which *opens* the Holy Book.

THE CONVENT OF ST. SIMEON, NEAR ASSOUÂN.

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man Cheîkh, whose name no one would tell me, has stepped into the inheritance of St. Hedere and of Khnoumou. So it is throughout Egypt. The people in changing their religion have not changed their nature, and those whom they continue to pray to under new names are the physician-gods worshipped by their ancestors. Perhaps they in their turn had borrowed the cult from one of the forgotten tribes who dwelt on the banks of the Nile in prehistoric times.

The convent occupies a very strong position. It is partly built in stories on the slope of the hill, partly on the edge of the rocky promontory that commands the last turn of the ouady. It is in the form of an irregular trapezium, the broader axis of which is in the direction from south to north. Like all the monasteries of Egypt, it was besides an asylum of prayer a fortress capable of resisting the most violent attacks for weeks. The outer wall is in a straight line, almost without towers or bastions, and still measures in places seven or eight yards in height. The lower courses are of big unhewn stones so as better to resist undermining; the upper courses are of brick, and all in such good condition that with a few cursory repairs the building would be able to withstand an attack. At one point only is the damage considerable, at the south-west

corner, at the place of disembarkation when coming from the river. A portion has fallen down for a length of about four yards, and the rubble spread along the base on the ground only half fills up the breach.

A broken vault and masses of scattered masonry can be seen in the interior, over which the wind has laid a thin covering of sand, then a corridor which leads to some dark chamber. It was the way by which the enemy entered in that last attack, and it has remained the same ever since. The entrance proper was sixty yards beyond, in an almost square projecting portion, standing out in the middle of the east front, and it was defended according to the rules of the art. In the angle formed by the projection and the wall was a low postern, which could not be approached without exposing to the defenders the side that the shield did not protect. When they had beaten in the wings of the door, Heaven knows at what cost, they found themselves in a dark chamber, in the left wall of which was another door, at least as solid as the first. Having passed through that, a third door, situated at the end of a corridor enclosed by two walls, had to be forced. It was the last, but even after gaining possession of that it must not be thought that the place was taken. Each of the two levels on

which the monastery was distributed formed an independent quarter separated from its neighbour by a wall. The enemy who had gained possession of the east door was master of the eastern quarter, but that covered scarcely a third of the total surface. A second siege had to be undertaken if the western quarter was to be taken, at least if the monks did not in despair deliver up the place without further resistance.

The convent chapel was as if thrown across the eastern quarter, and filled it almost entirely from the bastion of the entrance to the inner wall. The general plan is that of the classic basilica, slightly modified to the needs of the Christian worship. The atrium and the narthex are buried under the rubbish, but the outline of the *aula* can clearly be traced on the ground with the vast central nave, and the aisles divided from the nave, the north aisle, where the women assembled, by a screen pierced with doors, the south aisle, reserved for men, by three pillars, the bases of which remain. The roof has fallen in with the exception of a few places where the vaulting began to spring, but the aspect of the débris heaped on the ground and the walls still standing make it easy to reconstitute it. It consisted of a series of domes, side by side in a long line. The lateral naves had three each, that of the centre being broader than the two others. The

same system prevailed above the central nave, but the domes there were necessarily higher. It was planned, as is still the case in the greater number of the convents in Upper Egypt, to accentuate very clearly outside the disposition of the cross, which was not clearly enough shown in the interior. All the surfaces were whitewashed, and at most they might have painted the big knots, the outlines of which are vaguely to be seen on the remains of the whitewash, in three colours, black, yellow, and red. There was only real decoration in the choir, or, to give it its Arab name, in the *hekal* round the altar. It comprised three niches surmounted by a vaulted roof formed of a semi-dome open towards the congregation. We can just manage to see the marks of several layers of paintings superimposed one on the other, pieces of drapery and figures superior in style to that of the pictures that overlay them. They can scarcely go back beyond the eleventh century, and are probably the work of one of the monks of St. Hedere. In the curve of the apse the Christ is seated, a big, melancholy Christ, motionless in the midst of an oval glory. He wears a green tunic over which floats a purple cloak. He holds the Gospel resting on His knees with the left hand and lifts the right one in order to bless the world. Two angels and two saints frame Him symmetrically on the right and left, fairly well

preserved angels with their yellow wings, aureole, purple cloak and white dress. It is the traditional composition which repeats itself all over the world, in Italy as in Egypt, but the workmanship here is especially poor. Assouân was situated on the borders of Christian civilisation, and the arts suffered cruelly from the neighbourhood of barbarism. Nothing proves it better than the miserable procession the remains of which may be seen under the Christ on the vertical walls of the apse. There are twenty-four venerable personages, the old men of the Apocalypse, to whom the Egyptians assigned the names of the twenty-four letters of the alphabet. They stand side by side and face the spectators. They are tall, thin, unnatural, without consistency in their priestly garments, with long beards, expressionless features, enormous foreheads, big, deep-set eyes, unintelligent. The Coptic painters produced nothing more ugly.

It was all decaying when I first saw it twenty-two years ago, and it has become much worse since: a few more bad seasons and nothing will be left of it. Sgraffiti drawn with a knife or with red and black ink, in the two cells next the *hekal*, show the feelings of piety that the contemplation of these astounding works of art awoke in the soul of the religious. The formula scarcely ever varies. One, Archelaus, a native brother,

asks the Lord to pardon him his sins. One, Ammonios, who confesses himself the worst of monks, implores the divine mercy. Others implore the saints to remember them or not to forget a relative who entered into everlasting rest the 13th of Choïak of the sixth indiction. The greater part of the early ones are in Coptic. Some who no longer knew Coptic employ Arabic, and as the centuries advance Arabic more and more predominates. It is almost solely used in the inscriptions after the devastation of the convent, and appears everywhere in the chambers behind the apse, in the aisles, in the corridors, and in the chapels. The rocky wall against which the church leans had been worked as a quarry about the end of the Greek epoch, and the stonecutters had dug out excavations which sheltered hermits when Egypt was converted to Christianity. One of the last doubtless acquired a reputation for holiness in the neighbouring villages, for his retreat was changed into an oratory at the foundation of the convent and decorated with pictures. Here, as in the church, the painting was several times renewed in the course of centuries: the present one is nearly as extraordinary as the paintings in the apse. Two shining rows of sad hierarchical personages fill three of the sides, and among those whose names are legible may be distinguished some of the most illustrious saints of

the Coptic Calendar, the Apa Pnoup, the Apa Poimên, the Apa Mercoure, the Apa Phibammon. On the ceiling the haloed heads of saints grimace among the twistings of variegated winding lines. The other portions accessible from the quarry seem to have been utilised as dwelling-houses or store-houses for the servants. These would include the workmen necessary for keeping up the buildings, or for providing for the comfort of the monks, joiners, carpenters, bricklayers, smiths, bakers, shepherds, fishermen. These semi-laymen dwelt with their wives and children on the north and south sides of the church, and by its position their quarter was the place of transition between the world and the cloister. It seems to me that some of the buildings to be found there served as stables or poultry yards, at least on occasions of absolute necessity. When the Bedouins or the Nubian tribes prowled about the neighbourhood, intercepting communication with Assouân, the monks had to live, and how could they have managed if they had not possessed reserve of cattle within their walls ?

The monks lived on the north-west side, as far as possible from the profane life, and only communicated with the lower convent by a steep path supported against one of the aisles of the church. Their quarters seemed less like a house of religion

than a dungeon, the crenellated surfaces of which overhung the rock from east to north, and on west and south overlooked a large empty court-yard. The monks were completely isolated, and when the rest of the building had succumbed could hold out there for days or even weeks longer. The entrance was guarded by a tower, the guard-room of which was destroyed during the last attack which the place underwent. It is now approached over a heap of disaggregated bricks, and you find yourself in a sort of two-storied barrack, divided from south to north in five longitudinal divisions. The one into which we penetrated traversed the whole length of the building. It is vaulted from end to end, and is closed at the northern end by a clerestory of six superimposed openings, three, then two, then one, the three lowest cut in rectangular loopholes, the three above finished lancet fashion. Here and there portions of the walls or pieces of the roof have fallen down, and the ground is covered with the débris. The whitewash has peeled off, leaving the beaten earth exposed with which the beds of brick were plastered. Where it has lasted, it is covered with pious formulas and proper names, some in Coptic, but the greater number in Arabic. There are some of the twelfth century, but many are no more than ten or twelve years old: the dragomans of the dahabiehs have not omitted to

record in big letters in the most conspicuous places the day and month of their visit. Red crosses are spread among these writings, and in the centre of the gallery there are two pictures facing each other on the two walls. That on the east is entirely effaced, but enough of the other remains to allow us to perceive the subject. Christ is seated under a portico, in the position of a Byzantine Emperor. Two winged archangels mount guard symmetrically on His right and left, and then come six apostles standing in single file. The artist to whom we owe this piece was industrious, but his brush has betrayed him in a miserable fashion. Yet if he had succeeded, his brothers would not have attached more value to his work. When they prostrated themselves before it in their prayers it was not the picture they saw but the Christ Himself, His angels, His disciples, and the imperfections of the painting did not in the least disturb the beauty of their visions. They dwelt to the right and left in dark cells that could hold two, three, four, even six inmates. Benches of unburnt bricks marked the spot where they placed their coarse straw mats for their nightly repose, and niches in the wall held the lamp or the jar of fresh water from which they quenched their thirst. There they spent their hours of sleep, interrupted by interminable prayers, and scarcely left their cells

except to go down into the church or to the refectory. They took their meals in a gallery parallel to the first, to the west of their cells, and neighbouring halls represent perhaps the places of the chapter-house or the library.

The whitewash of the doors and walls is smooth and worn, soiled by contact with thousands of damp hands and monks' cloaks that rubbed against it in passing. A blackened lamp lies forgotten in one of the niches, water-jars almost intact lean here and there against a bench; at moments we have the impression that the ruins are of yesterday, and the monks are in hiding near at hand, only waiting for the retreat of the Gentiles to reinhabit their cells.

Their life pursued the even tenour of its way, empty, miserable. The storm of religious passion and the stress of theological ardour that swept over Egypt in the centuries preceding the Arab conquest had long abated when these monks took the vows that bound them. Some among them still nourished the faith of which martyrs are made, and courageously faced torture when a Sultan let persecution loose among them. They lacked the knowledge which had made their spiritual ancestors of Scete or Atripe famous, and which had put the heads of the Church of Alexandria in the first rank of the defenders of

orthodoxy. They still had a library in which they could have consulted the Coptic translations of the Fathers of the Greek Church, St. Basil, St. Chrysostom, St. Athanasius, St. Cyril, the original works of their most eloquent orators, Pisendi or Chenoude. But it would have been too strong meat for their minds, and most of them no longer understood the discussions on doctrine with which the sermons of these old preachers abound. It was a very long time since any of them had disputed concerning the nature of the Christ or the part of the Virgin Mother. They repeated the *Credo* of their spiritual heads without in the least attempting to understand it, and only cared for one dogma, that which, proclaiming the priority of the seat of St. Mark, made the Church of Alexandria at least the equal if not the superior of the Churches of Rome or Constantinople. Thus they let the theological manuscripts rot in their cases, and did not replace them as time destroyed them. Their scribes only re-copied the Lives of the Saints, the Psalms, the Epistles, the Apocalypse, the glosses that helped to the understanding of the two Testaments. It is probable that after the eighth century the greater part of the monks could not write, and could only read with difficulty. They employed their time in a routine of services and mortifications that prevented them getting very far

with their learning. The supreme authority of the abbot maintained an appearance of harmony among them, but they were secretly torn by hatreds that invariably develop among persons forced continually to meet each other in a too restricted space. Intrigues arose around each dignitary, and mutinies sometimes occurred in support of these intrigues. And then the Musulmans overwhelmed them with insults and annoyances. The armies of the King of Nubia, Christians as they were, came at intervals to pillage their farms and encamp at their gates, and they had either to repel their co-religionists by force or buy them off with money. The more distant Nubians, the troops of the Sultan, Arabs, negroes, Dilemites, Lowâtas, rose in their turn and claimed ransom ; then the monks had to make fresh sacrifices and disburse for the Musulmans at least as much as they had paid the Christians. The monks held firm for three or four hundred years, but at length, poor, hungry, diminished in numbers, in no condition to recruit their ranks or repair their walls, they threw up the game and took refuge in the Coptic communities of Edfou and of Esneh. About the middle of the thirteenth century the monastery of St. Hedere was deserted.

The staircase of the tower is no longer in a condition of solidity. Steps are wanting, and

those still there hold together only by a miracle, for they are worn, dented, unsteady, full of holes and cracks into which the feet go as in a trap. Half-way up, on a dangerous landing, a door gives access to the first floor of the convent. The arrangement is similar to that on the ground-floor, long vaulted galleries with sgraffiti and pictures of saints in bad condition, cells, assembly halls, stores. The terminal platform is not very safe, but, looking down, there is a view from it of a panorama of unexpected extent and beauty. First comes the monastery itself, crowded on its rocky saddle, the whole of its buildings, its open basilica exposed to all the winds, its courtyards filled with sand, its fallen walls. On three sides lies the desert, solitary and gloomy in the light of the setting sun. On the east the Nile glitters among its rocks, Elephantine displays its masses of foliage, Assouân stands out like a flat silhouette against a background of granite and sandstone, and beyond, in the far distance, a country inset with vaporous summits begins to be tinted with the pinks and violets of the evening light.

XXVIII

PHILÆ

We must take half an hour's journey by train, first through one of the native suburbs of Assouân, then in sight of a horde of Bicharis encamped on the outskirts of the suburb so as to give the tourists an impression of life in the desert, and lastly along a monotonous slope of rocks and reddish sand. The train is a real Paris suburban train, with its carriages too old for the service of the long-distance lines, with an old-fashioned locomotive, a great boiler stuck on wheels, which will resolutely do its fifteen miles an hour if the driver will let it. It goes painfully panting over the slope until at last straight in front of it, above the line of sandstone that just now bounded the horizon, there slowly come into view mounds of blackish granite and a blue-grey plain flooded with light in which the currents thread their way and cross each other. Groups of dying palms or withered acacias are set in the water in front of the embankment itself, marking the outline of the

ancient banks, and a mass of submerged buildings of different heights seems as if fallen into the middle of the basin—pylons, colonnades, kiosks, tops of temples—exactly what is to be seen of Philæ between December 15th of one year and May 15th of the following year. We get out of the train and embark, and coast successively the sanctuary of Isis, the propylæa of Hadrian, the Quay Wall on the east, and doubling at the spot where the obelisk of Nectanebo formerly marked the landing-stage of the ancient place of disembarkation, we arrive between the two porticoes of Augustus and Tiberius. We go through the monumental door, almost at the level of the inscription engraved by the French soldiers of Desaix, and passing through the courtyard reach the top step of the grand staircase. The water flows noisily from the house of the priests of Isis to the chapel of Hathor, then it runs to the right of the pronaos through the postern that opened on to the propylæa of Trajan and Hadrian. We seem to be transported unawares into one of the fantastic havens bordered with watch-towers and palaces that the Romans of the Imperial epoch were fond of painting on the walls of their villas.

Tourists may still go dryshod over the place of disembarkation, the hypostyle, the Holy of Holies, the courtyard and Chamber of the New Year, the

portions of buildings grouped in front or on the sides of the naos, and the corridors that form communications between them. At least the Nile only wets them exceptionally when the north wind, stirring the water, raises waves which flow through the halls. But if the water only seldom flows over the pavements, its presence is felt everywhere in the veinings and under the outer layer of the stone. Without possibility of preventing its progress, it has silently filtered through from bottom to top, by rills as fine as hairs, and between two inundations has impregnated the entire fabric. The walls look damp to the eye and are damp to the fingers if they are touched. The sandstone has shed the grey granulated covering the dryness of which had clothed it for centuries, and it slowly resumes the yellowish colour it had in the quarry. The faded and dirty colours which here and there clothe the figures of the gods or the architectural ornaments are strengthened and revived by the damp. Even the celebrated capitals of the pronaos have less dry and inharmonious tones than formerly. The reds, blues, yellows, and greens have insensibly run into each other at the edges under the persistent influence of the dampness acting behind them in the stone; and while this interior work softens and shades them, the reflections of the ever-moving water which light them from

below through the bay of the pylon make the colours vibrate delightfully.

Their beauty should be enjoyed while it remains entire, for work is still going on at the barrage on that side. The granite causeway is being enlarged, since it no longer offers a sufficiently firm base for new courses of masonry, and the rocks of the Cataract, blasted every day, provide the material which will allow the engineers to raise the present plan of the reservoir six or seven yards. And in five or six years nearly all that was spared in 1902 will be delivered up to the flood.[1] It will flow over the threshold of the doors, it will invade without hindrance the parts provisionally guarded from it, it will deliberately attack the walls, and will not desist until it has reached the prescribed level. The figures of divinities and kings who meet or pursue one another from the plinth to the frieze, presenting and accepting the offering, prostrated, bowed, ranged in ceremonious rows, will be gradually drowned—the feet one day, then the knees, the loins, the bust, the head—so that nothing of them more will be seen, and the mystery of the worship of Isis will be for ever hidden. A sort of rectangular balustrade will mark the site of the kiosk of Trajan. The roof of the sanctuary and the

[1] This was written in 1908.

terraces of the pronaos will float above like rafts of stone anchored one behind the other, and only the four towers of the pylons waist high will dominate the waters.

It needs a veritable effort of memory to recall at all accurately what the platform looked like scarcely eight years ago. Philæ, still intact, ingenuously exhibited the relics of her past, temples surrounded by parasitic buildings, porticoes, pagan chapels, churches built out of the débris of the temples, Greek, Arab, Coptic houses crowded together along the alleys and the borders of the open squares. The first shapeless layer of rubbish having been removed and thrown into the river, the skeleton of the ruins was laid bare ; the tourist looked into the interior of the houses just as happened to the adventurous Zambullo when the Devil on two sticks removed the roofs of Madrid for his benefit. And if our tourist could no longer see pictures of actual life, there was nothing to prevent him from reconstructing the general aspect of the city by the aid of his imagination.

Our Philæ is a creation of man, or at least in the beginning there was nothing in the place it occupies except a little granite archipelago, such as there are many from one end of the Cataract to the other. The chances of the inundation leave sandy shores or banks of blackish mud between

the rocks, and they serve to join them together, but usually what one year brings the next year entirely sweeps away. But sometimes the alluvium resists and, increasing continuously, creates a permanent island which is soon covered with verdure, and attracts a few inhabitants. Shall we ever know if Philæ existed before the Saîd Dynasties? In any case no Isis of this extraction could have become sovereign goddess under the victorious Pharaohs when the Theban Dynasties ruled as far as the confluence of the two Niles. Elephantine was then the important town, and its god, Khnoumou, monopolised the people's piety and offerings. Philæ only succeeded in coming forward several centuries later when the empire was divided, and when the First Cataract served as the boundary between Egypt proper and the kingdom of Meroe. Then only did Isis, placed at the meeting-point of two great States, and envied without cessation by each, realise the conditions necessary for playing an important part. The district that fortune assigned her for residence enjoyed a peculiar reputation for holiness. It was formerly imagined that it marked the point where the waters of the firmament, rushing down on the land, gave birth to the Nile, the foster-father. But in the end people became convinced that it was nothing of the kind, and sought the natural source

farther to the south. The legend did not, however, die at once, it only adopted a new version. The Nile did not fall from the sky, it came up out of the ground, and two bottomless gulfs were shown in front of Sehel whence it violently gushed forth to flow in two opposite directions, towards Egypt in the north, towards Ethiopia in the south. The two nations implicitly believed in the existence of these contrary currents,[1] and Isis and Osiris, the gods of the land where the miracle occurred, seemed to them worthy of all veneration, but foreign saints invariably exercise a stronger attraction than native ones.

The Ethiopians were doubtless the first to honour the island and its goddess with a special devotion, and very soon were imitated by the Egyptians. After a very few years the fame of

[1] Herodotus II. xxviii. Like many legends, this rests on a natural fact, ill understood. Before the Assouân barrage existed the impact of the Cataract on the mass of the water in the centre of the river caused a somewhat strong back current at Begeh and Hesseh, which, flowing along the left bank, made its effect felt as far as Bab-Kalabcheh. The reis of the Berber boats know it well, and utilise it for an easy ascent of the river in the summer months when the sluice-gates of the dam are open. It is certainly the existence of this back current that suggested to the river-side population the idea of two Niles flowing in opposite directions, one to the north to Egypt, the other to the south to Ethiopia.

the goddess passed beyond the frontiers, and pilgrims crowded from Europe and Asia as well as from the Soudan.

In order to prevent the destruction of the ground by the action of the same forces that had created it, some Pharaoh whom we cannot specify had protected the south front by strong quays. It is the side facing Nubia that receives the full force of the current. But the most ancient sanctuary was neither large nor splendid enough to suffice for the multitude of the faithful. The Ptolemies built our temple, and the Roman Emperors, continuing their work, grouped around it subsidiary buildings which allowed the clergy to arrange the rites and ceremonies on a large scale. The nature of the buildings and the reasons for them are clearly seen when viewed from the top of the pylon. On festival days the pilgrims approached from the south; a staircase contrived in the thickness of the masonry, between the kiosk of Nectanebo and the chapel of Arihosnofir, led to the entrance of the temple. There they formed in procession with their offerings and the sacrificial victims, and, headed by the priests, made their way to the first pylon between the porticoes. Before the construction of the barrage the building was almost intact, and the descriptions of classical writers, added to the subjects of the bas-reliefs,

easily furnish sufficient material for reconstructing it.

The people, garbed in white and carrying palm-branches, waited under the porticoes, and as soon as the first visitors set foot on the ground, shouts burst forth. Nothing could have been more varied than this multitude. It was made up of elements that came from every part of the world, not only of Egyptians or Greeks, but of people from great Rome, of Spaniards and Gauls, even of the barbarians of Scythia or Persia, each in his national costume and with his national characteristics. The religion of Isis was joyous and gentle, as was proper with a goddess who taught human beings the use of wheat and cereals, sanctified marriage, organised the family, and promulgated social laws. Choristers, accompanied by the various kinds of harps and flutes sculptured on the columns of the small temple of Hathor, hastened or retarded the march. The music was heard long after the end of the procession had disappeared within the great door. As no one would have dared to present himself empty-handed, the treasure and mortmain of Isis compared favourably with the fortune of the most richly endowed gods in the world. Kings and Emperors gave farms, vineyards, cattle and slaves, whole territories indeed. Private individuals left her gold, jewels, precious

stuffs, statues. There was no worshipper so poor that he did not offer his cake, his flowers, or his bird at some altar, and the priest was not alone in profiting by the gift. The residents lodged all these people, and provided the trifling objects that each took away as sacred souvenirs of his visit. It would be an error to think that the ancient divinities were incapable of inspiring in their worshippers the fervour and ecstasies that characterise Christian pilgrims. Faith was as strong and religious feeling as deep at Philæ as they are at Lourdes or Jerusalem. If the coarse figures of the human Isis or the serpent Isis which we pick up in the ruins could speak, they would tell us the same tales of grief consoled or peace restored to unhappy souls as the humble tin Virgins or the penny crucifixes in Palestine.

The prosperity lasted for five centuries, and then the pagan persecutor endured at the hands of triumphant Christianity the same persecution that he himself had inflicted. Philæ and its Isis owe it to their position that they defied its effects, and so survived the most celebrated sanctuaries and divinities. The attraction they exercised from the first on the Ethiopians was felt in turn by all the peoples who followed in the valley of the Upper Nile after the fall of the kingdom of Meroe. When the Blemmyes

took possession of Nubia in the middle of the third century A.D., they did not escape it, and later, when the Emperor Theodosius ordered the temples to be closed, the reverence they excited gave effective protection. The Christians of Philæ, encouraged by the bishops of Syene, would have liked nothing better than to carry out the prescriptions of the Imperial edict, but had they touched the goddess or her priests they would have provoked an attack of the Blemmyes. They took care not to do so; and while everywhere else the idols succumbed to the attacks of the monks, Isis remained firm in the very face of Christ triumphant. Even in 451, under Marcian, a regular treaty changed the equivocal toleration by which she had benefited into a national obligation for the Romans. For a hundred years from the day on which it was signed, the Blemmyes would have the right to come and prostrate themselves before her altars. And such was the weakness of the Empire and the fear of the barbarians, that, in spite of the impatience of the devout, the regulation was respected to the end. It was only towards the end of the reign of Justinian that, the Nubians having destroyed the Blemmyes, Theodore, bishop of Syene, pulled down the altars and turned the temple into a church.

We can imagine what would have been the

condition of the unfortunate priests during that last century. The greater number of their fellow-citizens were converts to the dominant religion, and only those who belonged to some old sacerdotal family remained faithful to the old religion. We can imagine them shut up in the sacred enclosure, and leading there a precarious existence under the perpetual menace of popular fanaticism. They had still their hours of joy, however, when an embassy sent by the king of the Blemmyes disembarked with ceremony, bringing the official offerings. They put on their ceremonial robes, took the statue from her tabernacle, opened both wings of the doors, and awaited their guests near the kiosk of Nectanebo. They advanced in procession as of old, and the expression of their faith was so strong that the worshippers might easily have believed themselves to be carried back several generations to the time when Isis was really mistress of the world. The illusion lasted for the few weeks they stayed in the town, then, the ceremonies performed and the time of their sojourn expired, they had to regain their native land.

About two miles to the south of Philæ the Nile suddenly turns and is lost in a bend, and the eye, seeing the granite cliff that hides Nubia, perceives nothing beyond. How often must these poor followers of Isis whose names, Smêt or Smêtkhêm or Pakhoumios, are preserved in the

inscriptions, have gathered on one of the towers of the great south pylon to assist at the departure! Might it not be the last visit of these departing friends? The fury of the Christians was continually growing, and the cries against the goddess rose more persistently to the heavens. If it pleased the bishops to stir up the inhabitants of the neighbouring convents and let them loose in the island, where could the followers of Isis hope for safety, and what could the Blemmyes do except avenge their murder in the blood of their murderers? However, the boats, wafted by the north wind, went on their way to the sound of hymns. One after another they saluted, doubled the point, disappeared, and the last had long vanished while the priests still sought to see it. What did it not cost them to tear themselves away from the contemplation of the Nile, once again become solitary, and to descend again into the heavy atmosphere of religious hatred that the joy of their ephemeral security had momentarily lightened? Every year since my return to Egypt I make a pilgrimage to the platform which witnessed their grief, and standing before the panorama which has changed so little since their day, I see, just as they did, the flotilla of Nubian boats vanish in the south, and thinking of their wretched existence, I feel in my own heart the rebound of their anguish.

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